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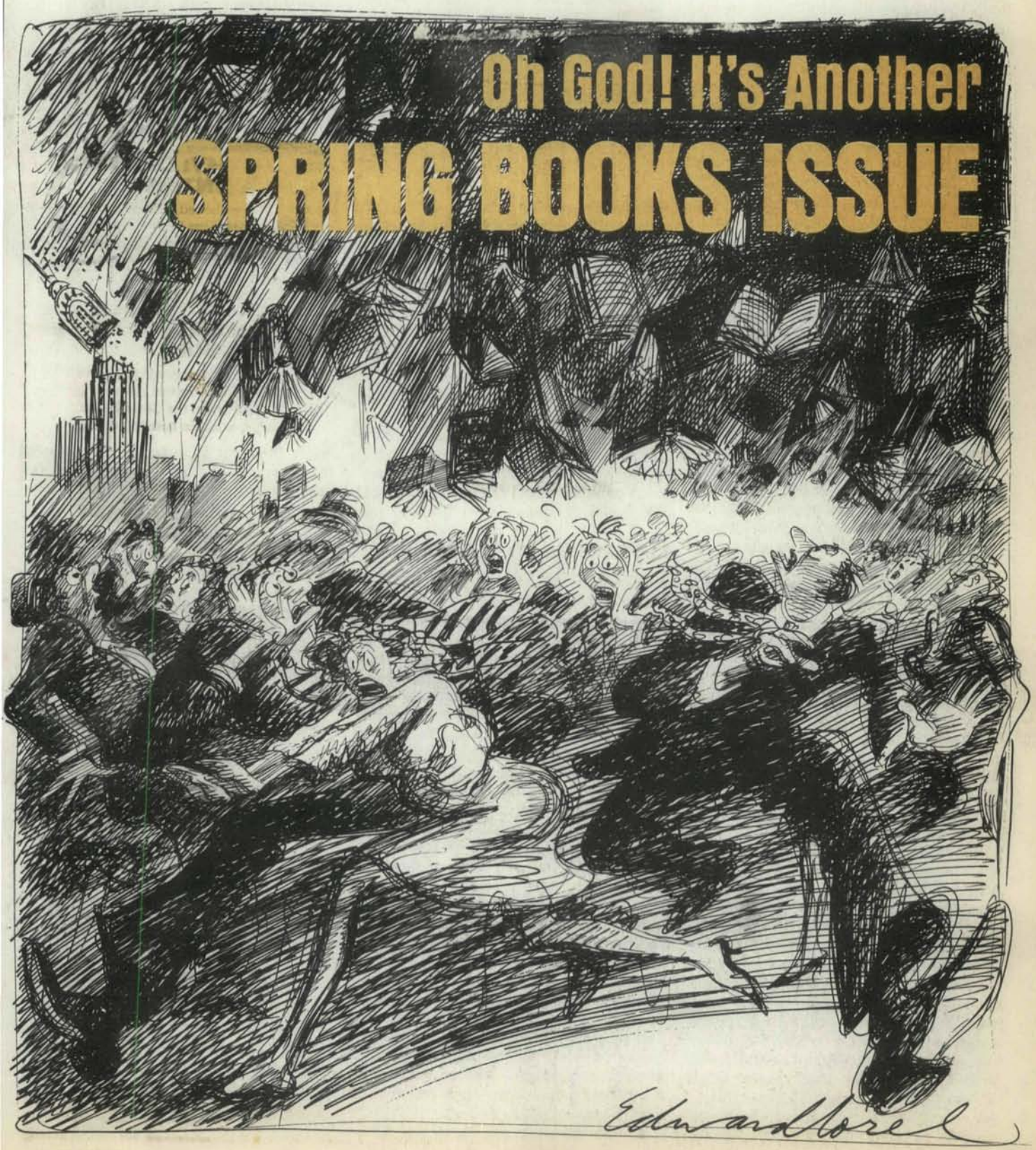
PERIODICALS



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LETTERS.

GIMME SHELTER

Chicago

This seems not to have occurred to Roberta Brandes Gratz in her review of the Prince of Wales's architecture book ["What We Call Character," March 5]: The South Bronx and Manhattan's trumpery towers are one building. The faceless brutal enormity of it is a crystalline projection of a multinational conglomerate corporate culture. I'm afraid her Prince's program is exactly that on which late Modernism foundered, the hope that architectural order could be grafted onto a disordered economy.

As I understand it, the Modern movement began in the context of radical social-democratic experiments. These failed or were perverted during World War I and its aftermath. Without that economic context, Modernism withered into wishful formalisms, still practiced. Egomania is an occupational hazard in the gifted and learned professions and architects are peculiarly vulnerable; they occupy a nether world between the two. Their practice is societal, not clinical, textual or theatrical. Their self-critical time scale is not measured by the next journal or review but in project years. And they function in an intellectual vacuum. Their proper resources, the social sciences, barely survive.

The Prince would be well advised, if he is serious, to invest some of the Windsor billions in dozens of competing, racially various departments of sociology and economy, asking from them an acute understanding of the realities of emotional and physical and economic scale and their temporal infrastructures. We experiment, theorize and plan for every contingency but sanity. *Gerrard Pook*

ST. LOUIS BLUES

St. Louis

Disney's plaster mermaids recall "a feminist consciousness of lifeless stereotypes," interprets Alfred Corn in his review of Brenda Hillman's poem "Broken Dreams" ["Unilateral Disarmament," April 2]. And her book title, *Fortress*, is the feminine form of the (masculine?) word *fort*, he reasons. I can't wait to hear Corn's explanation of Venus de Milo's missing arms.

Since I'm from Missouri, I'd rather hear from Hillman than Corn about what she meant in her poem "Bookstore" by "blue unforgiving/knowledge." Apparently Corn has never heard of what every outstate yokel and every South St. Louis blue-collar worker knows. Blue, here, means the blue laws, which say no to the purchase of alcohol in a store or a saloon on Sunday for Roman Catholics; no to a First Baptist baseball game; no to a lawyer or real estate agent writing a valid contract on Sunday; no to an Orthodox Jew or to a Christian fundamentalist having much fun or doing much of anything on the Sabbath. I know that Corn knows what blue pencil means. All of it means no. It means prohibition, pressure to conform to laws and norms, external and internal. It means restraints. In that sense his "policeman's-uniform blue" is acceptable. But it is not "illusion that has to be protected," it is existential freedom, especially freedom from the bonds of rational thought, that needs protection.

Virginia Seaver

A FLOWER FOR KAREL

Sandisfield, Mass.

John Clute's interesting article on the reemergence of the writings of Karel Capek, "Prague Wellspring" [May 7], failed to mention one of Capek's books that has remained in print since it was first published in 1931, originally by Dover and subsequently by university presses, currently by the University of Wisconsin. Every literate gardener knows and treasures Karel Capek's hilarious *The Gardening Year*, with its equally funny illustrations by Capek's brother Josef. Capek was obviously in the tradition of great Czechoslovak gardeners and even has a plant named for him: Saxifraga x *megaseaeflora* 'Karel Capek'. The contrast of the biting satire of Capek's serious publications with this lighthearted satiric recounting of the month-by-month tribulations of the gardener adds special interest. Every gardener should have this slender book for once-a-year reading. *Norman Singer*

RUN MORE THAN YOUR MOUTH

Easthampton, Mass.

It appears to me that the left is having a difficult time distinguishing victory from defeat in the current turmoil of world politics, and consequently it is unable to offer any idea of how to transform the latter into the former.

My case in point is the general tone of *Nation* articles and editorials on the subject of Eastern Europe. Whether we on the left like it or not, capitalism has won—not as a functioning system but as an idea. Socialism is no longer concretely represented by highly flawed models requiring democratization—it is now a vague political abstraction. This may be great for theorists, but it is lousy for activists.

The Nation fleetingly acknowledged this problem in its editorial following the UNO victory in Nicaragua. But that insight was negated by another editorial praising Jesse Jackson's political sagacity in rejecting the Washington mayoralty. He is being sharply challenged by the right wing of his own constituency, from Douglas Wilder to Louis Farrakhan. Does *The Nation* think he can lead progressive Democrats by posing with Nelson Mandela and hosting a talk show? Marion Barry is right—Jackson will have to run more than his mouth if he wants to build a political base.

We must start working to reconstitute democratic socialism as a concrete alternative in the United States and the world. That requires a recognition that recent events have made this not easier but far more difficult.

Michael Engel

ABSOLUTELY THE LAST POINT

Palo Alto, Calif.

Peggy Noonan has resolved once and for all the source of George Bush's enigmatic "thousand points of light" metaphor [Christopher Hitchens, "Minority Report," May 8, 1989; "Letters," Sept. 25 and Nov. 13, 1989, and March 19]. Noonan said in an interview that she may have been influenced by a favorite author, Thomas Wolfe, who wrote in *The Web and the Rock* of a "thousand points of friendly light." Wolfe used "points of light" more than once. He offered this vision of our country in *You Can't Go Home Again*:

> [I]t's not so big—only three thousand miles from east to west, only two thousand miles from north to south—but all between, where ten thousand points of light prick out the cities, towns, and villages, there, seeker, you will find us burning in the night.

While President Bush might have enjoyed the majesty of Wolfe's description and fervent patriotism, he should have read further:

> Here, as you pass through the brutal sprawl, the twenty miles of rails and rickets, of the South Chicago slums—here, in an unpainted shack, is a Negro boy, and, seeker, he is burning in the night. Behind him is a memory of the cotton fields, the flat and mournful pineland barrens of the lost and buried South, and at the fringes of the pine another nigger shack, with mammy and eleven little niggers. Farther still behind, the slave-driver's whip, the slave ship, and, far off, the jungle dirge of Africa. And before him, what? A roped-in ring, a blaze of lights, across from him a white champion; the bell, the opening, and all around the vast sea-roaring of the crowd. Then the lightning feint and stroke, the black panther's paw—the hot, rotating presses, and the rivers of sheeted print! O seeker, where is the slave ship now? . . .
>
> So, then, to every man his chance—to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity—to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him—this, seeker, is the promise of America.

And a kinder, gentler place may it be.

Dan Lowery

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EDITORIALS.

Tale of Two Books

What was it John Milton said in *Areopagitica*? "As good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye."

In these days of censorship—by threat of cutoff of government funding, by conglomeration, by obsessive bottom-line-ism and even by self—it is easy to forget the power of art and particularly of books. Perhaps that's what John Kennedy had in mind when, in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs, he remarked to historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "I hope you kept a full account of that." Schlesinger said he had understood that the President wanted no note-takers on his staff, but Kennedy said, "No, go ahead. You can be damn sure that the C.I.A. has its record and the Joint Chiefs theirs. We'd better make sure we have a record over here." Hence, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, Schlesinger's admiring memoir written the year after the assassination.

Cut now to the *Nation* office twenty-six years later. Our guest and speaker at a seminar for *Nation* staff and interns is Cheddi Jagan, three times popularly elected Prime Minister of British Guiana prior to its independence in 1964 and today the leader of Guyana's largest political party. Jagan wrote a book, *The West on Trial: The Fight for Guyanese Freedom* (Seven Seas Books, 1966), in which he charged that but for U.S. intervention, he and his party would have won the Guyanese election of 1964 and ushered the country

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into its new era of independence (and perhaps, we would add, have avoided some of the bloodshed, racial conflict, misery and chaos that came in the wake of his party's defeat). As proof of Kennedy Administration intervention, he cited *A Thousand Days*, in which Schlesinger said he reported to the President that Jagan's opponent "would cause us many fewer problems." Jagan was under suspicion because of his Marxist wife and his leftist politics, as evidenced by his responses during a *Meet the Press* interview, and, writes Schlesinger, there was a way to beat him. "Jagan's parliamentary strength was larger than his popular strength: he had won 57 percent of the seats on the basis of 42.7 percent of the vote. An obvious solution would be to establish a system of proportional representation," which, on Schlesinger's recommendation and with the collusion of the British, was finally done. Jagan was out.

Enter Professor Archie Singham, member of the *Nation* editorial board, longtime Caribbeanist and activist-scholar. At Singham's suggestion, we sent a copy of the relevant passages of Jagan's book to Schlesinger, suggesting that the Pulitzer Prize–winner join the seminar. The cold war must indeed be over: Schlesinger, who has had a long but uneasy history with *The Nation*,* called to say he would accept, with great anticipation.

Those present at the seminar witnessed a rare thing: a private public apology. Schlesinger was quick to say, "I felt badly about my role thirty years ago." He conceded that Jagan was right about U.S. intervention, although he said that the United States was motivated less by a security concern about a Communist threat in the hemisphere than by a domestic political concern. "There was a great feeling after the Bay of Pigs, where the impression arose that Eisenhower had prepared an expedition to get rid of Castro, that Kennedy had lacked the resolution to follow through on it. It was just politically going to look very bad if the dominoes began to fall in South America. . . . The fear was that Congress might use aid to British Guiana as a means of attacking the whole aid bill then before it. . . . Then of course what really happened was the C.I.A. got involved, got the bit between its teeth, and the covert action people thought it was a chance to show their stuff. . . . I think a great injustice was done to Cheddi Jagan."

For his part, Jagan's emphasis on the need for a multiclass, multiethnic, pluralistic coalition government with free press guarantees, suggests how far he too has moved from the stereotypical cold war "deep pro-communist emotion" attributed to him in *A Thousand Days.*

The Jagan-Schlesinger encounter, then, yields three morsels to ruminate upon: First, it provides yet another example of the damage to our values and to innocent third parties inflicted by cold war obsessions; second, it suggests the importance of establishing some international procedures (perhaps building on the U.N. experience in Namibia and Nicaragua) for the supervision and monitoring of elections globally, beginning with Guyana; and finally, coming back to *Areopagitica*, it reminds us that "books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them." Welcome to our Spring Books issue.

* Schlesinger wrote for *The Nation* in the 1940s, but in the 1950s he and the editors fell out on cold war issues. After Schlesinger denounced *Nation* editor Carey McWilliams as a "Typhoid Mary of the left," McWilliams riposted that Schlesinger spoke "the language of McCarthyism even if spoken with a Harvard accent."

Cracked Mosaic

On some date toward the middle of the Reagan-Koch decade just past, New York City ceased to have a "white" majority. Demographers disagree about the details (undercounting of recent immigrants and socially marginalized populations is notorious), but it's clear that no self-identified racial, linguistic, ethnic or cultural group took over the city the way the Irish once wrested control of Boston from the WASPs, or blacks became the new majorities in several depressed cities in the industrial Midwest. What happened was that an entirely new kind of urban society was created—a multicultural, polycentric stew in which old social relations lost their force, old political patterns were broken and old moral guideposts disappeared. The early consequences—in violence, tension and civil anarchy—can be seen on the streets and the nightly news by every New Yorker.

A Haitian shopper argues with a Korean grocer in Brooklyn, whereupon an African-American nationalist group boycotts the store. Latino, Afro-Caribbean and Asian immigrant students at a public college protest the policies of a largely Irish-American administration and the attitudes of a largely Jewish faculty—none of whom can stand the other. Yugoslav immigrants beat up on blacks in the Bronx—but even the Yugoslavs are riven with nationalist antagonisms imported from Balkan history. Black youths attack Vietnamese, Cubans are at Puerto Ricans' throats, Italian-Americans murder blacks, and then there are the hundreds of assaults against women and gays, which without much of a conceptual stretch can be fairly categorized as communal strife.

There is a lot of old-fashioned racism and hatemongering involved in these conflicts, but the old white-black model of racial hatred does not serve very well either as an analytic tool to understand what's going on or as the basis for policies to make peace. The multiplicity of communities in New York—and, increasingly, in other cities around the country—are isolated, disempowered, fearful, insecure and competitive. Little slights, such as the way a Korean grocer may show disrespect or distrust to black customers, are magnified by the frustration many blacks feel at their lack of economic power in their own neighborhoods. The Korean shops are facilitated by credit associations run by and for Koreans. African-Americans have no similar access to capital, and hundreds of thousands of black youths are consigned to (short) lives outside the fabled market economy. They are without hope.

It is not simply a matter of convenience to associate the

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names Reagan and Koch with the development of this particular brand of communal conflict. Reagan's disdain for urban (i.e., black and poor) affairs and Koch's unmistakable race-baiting and his political partnership with real estate speculators and developers helped push New York over the edge. But Mayor David Dinkins and the kinder, gentler crew now in power don't seem to understand the new sociology of their city any better than their predecessors did.

Lacking are the structures of a civil society that can mediate the inevitable crises of multicultural communities. Politicians can't provide them, but they can help the process along—by funding and encouraging community organizations, economic development and cultural growth. Not long ago, when a fire in an unlicensed social club killed eighty-seven people—mostly Honduran immigrants—Dinkins's reaction was to order the police to padlock as many of the thousand-or-so clubs as could be found. No one thought about the countless poor people for whom the clubs are centers of social life and strong institutions of cultural identity. More than preachments against intolerance, some support for the isolated communities of his city would begin to solve the problems Dinkins must now face.

Silent Reproach

Some events carry an exceptional symbolic charge. There have been more serious racist crimes in France, notably murders of Arabs, but the profanation of graves and the mutilation of corpses discovered on May 9 and 10 in Carpentras, where Jews have lived since the Middle Ages, was such an event. The revulsion against the desecration of the dead and the revival of the memory of the Holocaust combined to shock a nation, and on May 14 protest marches were improvised throughout the country. At the biggest, in Paris, some 200,000 participated for hours, their silence eloquently proclaiming "never again." Joining the marchers were the President, the Prime Minister, dignitaries of most religions and leaders of all political parties—except Jean-Marie Le Pen and his xenophobic National Front—and that was the main virtue of this consensus of indignation.

Perhaps because it is awkward for an atheist to walk behind the Cardinal and the *Grand Rabbin* and for a leftist to march in step with reactionary leaders—although rejoicing that we were so many and that the line of march, from the Place de la République to the Bastille, was so long—I kept asking myself a series of questions. France has the second-largest Jewish community in Europe, after the Soviet Union, and Jews were prominent in this procession. Would there have been so many of us if the victims had been Muslim? (It's sadly true that there were not many Arabs in this demonstration.) Had the Jews from North Africa, who used to chant *Algérie Française* together with Le Pen, finally grasped that racism is indivisible, that it starts with wogs or gooks and ends with yids? Was the presence of Jacques Chirac, the former Prime Minister, and his conservative colleagues a sort of *mea culpa*? After all, deprived of office by the left, they had started a campaign attributing unemployment and insecurity to foreigners, only to discover that Le Pen could stoop lower still and beat them at their own game. And was the prominence of the left in general, and of the Socialists in particular, a sign that they have now grasped the fact that to fight racism you must have the courage of your opinions and act on them even if it means antagonizing a part of the electorate?

Those questions are not irrelevant, because in the past ten years race relations in France have regressed. The taboos brought about by Nazi crimes have been broken. You can now utter insanities about Arabs and even about Jews without preceding them with "I am not a racist but . . ." The National Front, whose leader has publicly proclaimed that the Holocaust is "a detail," is credited with about 15 percent support in the most recent opinion polls.

And it is not merely a case of "French flu." Wherever reason fails to offer solutions, unreason fills the space. As we were walking I thought of Eastern Europe and the rediscovery there of the irrational heritage. Stalin, his henchmen and his successors did not solve the national question; they did not eliminate racism and chauvinism. General repression merely drove the symptoms below the surface, where they continued to fester until revealed by *glasnost*. One of the first "free" acts of the Bulgarians was to protest against equal rights for Turks, and of the Romanians, to stage a pogrom against Hungarians. Add to this the anti-Semitism without Jews in Poland and with them in Russia, the atavistic hatreds of Azerbaijanis and Armenians, and of various minorities in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and you will recognize that reason still has a tremendous field to conquer.

The disease can strike here, there and everywhere. And so it was an excellent thing that, reacting to the provocation, freethinkers and Muslims, gentiles and Jews, thousands and thousands of them, marched toward the Bastille, many of them wearing a yellow star to show they have not forgotten and will not allow history to repeat itself. It was also good that the same day all the French television channels showed *Nacht und Nebel* ("Night and Fog"), a film about Nazi concentration camps. But what is at stake is not one procession, one mass or one joint service at a synagogue. This is a battle that is both daily and universal and, whatever may have happened to our dreams in the East, part of a broader struggle for a different kind of society. DANIEL SINGER

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s Europe correspondent.*

Going for Gonzo

Hunter Thompson's most paranoid fantasies are coming true. Aspen, where he ran for sheriff in 1970 to keep "greedheads and land rapers" from taking over the old mining town, has become a celebrity salt lick and a paradise for real estate developers. Owl Farm, his home for more than twenty years in nearby Woody Creek, was invaded by six agents of the Aspen Dis-

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

The Liberal Imagination

The evening of Sunday, May 13, saw me in San Francisco as one of the speakers at an event titled "Central America and the Middle East: Are They Victims of the Liberals' Agenda?" As I trundled up Highway 101 toward the Women's Building at 18th and Valencia I readied myself for a fairly sparse crowd. It was Mother's Day, and despite the undoubted organizing abilities of the Bay Area Labor Committee on Central America and the Labor Committee on the Middle East, I thought that many of the dedicated sons and daughters who ordinarily go to meetings on Sunday evenings would instead be treating Mom to a night on the town.

The place was packed. Many a mom's idea of a jolly outing was evidently to hear someone beating up on liberals. By way of preface to my remarks I raised the age-old question of nature versus nurture. Are liberals born that way, or are they slowly schooled toward that state of pusillanimous mental debility known as "the liberal outlook"? When Anthony Lewis entered this world, was there already implanted in his neurobiological infrastructure the mental coding that one day, fifty-two years later, would cause him to say that the labor activists and Communist Workers Party members murdered by police agents, Klansmen and Nazis in Greensboro, North Carolina, in November 1979 had prompted that hail of bullets by their "provocative" behavior?

Suppose one had had the opportunity to ask the infant Lewis, already studying the *Federalist Papers* in his cradle, about the great violence directed by MacArthur at the Bonus Army march to Washington in 1932, when Lewis was 5. Would he not have laid aside the *Papers* and expressed the view that while the actions of the military were to be deplored, one had to take into consideration the fact that the marchers were clearly unruly and furthermore most certainly included organizers from the Communist Party?

The crowd in the Women's Building was mustard-keen to hear about liberal infamy, by which of course is mostly meant the thoughts and deeds of almost anyone associated with the Democratic Party. We are in that trough in the four-year cycle when people dare, if only briefly, to raise their eyes above the prison wall of lesser-of-two-evilsism.

So piled high in front of me were my notes on recent highlights of liberal achievement: Senator Dodd backing Unita and helping rush more money to the Salvadoran military after the Jesuits were murdered; Senator Kerry failing to turn up for a press conference to publicize a film drawn from the files—smuggled into the United States—of the nongovernmental Salvadoran Human Rights Commission; Representative Solarz, who seized leadership from the Congressional Black Caucus on efforts to force an immediate halt in Israel's escalating arms sales to South Africa, talking a good game and then losing all sense of urgency.

In the course of my oration I found, as always, that Carter-bashing is immensely popular and can be guaranteed to rouse even the most comatose audience from torpor. It's easy to hold a crowd when you tell the story of Jimmy Carter helping to save the future *contra* leaders in 1979, then hastening south eleven years later, in February of this year, to make sure that the nation he had helped to destroy was having a truly "fair" election. Question time brought evidence of people's constant yearning for better things, like a radical mass movement.

Liberal Protests

The next day I found an expression of the liberal spirit that the crowd would have loved: an editorial in *The New York Times* anguishing about a recent decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit refusing to recognize a constitutional "right to beg" in the New York City subways. Savor this delicious sentence: "The U.S. Court . . . reached the right result in the wrong way. The court recognized interests of riders but intemperately denied *any* validity in the beggars' free-speech claims."

Back in January, Judge Leonard Sand, in a stirring expression of this country's fundamental values, ruled that begging was a form of political speech and that the transit authority could not admit some beggars (e.g., licensed charities) and exclude others. The *Times* did not care for that reasoning, which "slighted concerns of the city." But it was also unhappy with the appellate court's decision that panhandling in the subway was nothing less than "a menace to the public good." The *Times* concluded that while "unregulated begging can indeed menace subway riders . . . it would have been more judicious, and gracious, to rule simply that this mixture of speech and action was subject to reasonable time, place and manner restrictions."

Close your eyes for a minute: "It would be more judicious to pass legislation placing military aid to the *contras* under restrictions while furnishing sufficient humanitarian aid . . . " There's no doubt about it, people are born writing this sort of stuff. No parent or school could impart its rhythms.

When licenses were issued for panhandlers in Manhattan's Port Authority terminal earlier in the year, a *Times* copy editor was first in line to get one. His intention, James Benagh said, was to make sure there was one panhandler the less on Port Authority premises. It seems his son had been hassled there a couple of times. Benagh's logic is faulty. By diminishing the supply of licenses he raised the value of those in circulation. The higher the price beggars pay for licenses (originally issued free) on the unofficial market the more desperate and predatory their begging will be, and the more likely that the beggars will resort to violence to pay off the raised cost of the investment.

Liberal Pretenses, Liberal Deeds

I'd thought from the first reports in the West Coast papers that Jimmy Breslin started cursing out Ji-Yeon Yuh, his Korean-American *Newsday* colleague, the minute her electronic memo critical of one of his columns popped up on his

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computer screen. But in *Newsday*'s own account of it Breslin had a day to think things over before he came into the newsroom yelling "Let's get racial," calling the absent Yuh a "slant-eyed cunt" and a "yellow cur," and saying that "the fucking bitch doesn't know her place." The previous day, when he'd seen her three-line critique of what was a rather heavy-handed bit of sexist jocularity (about his wife, who since being elected to the City Council has no time to lay out his clothes), he'd sent his own electronic message to *Newsday*'s New York editor saying he wouldn't tolerate this sort of criticism.

It was not until the next day that he let loose with the Yellow Peril stuff. Then, having published a not particularly apologetic piece of self-exculpation, he called up the Howard Stern radio show. This has made its own fairly major contribution to the rancid nature of public talk on the East Coast. Stern rambles coarsely, urged on by an irritating woman called Robin Quivers, who gives sycophantic bursts of laughter at each oafish sally. Breslin told Stern that he was calling for advice on how to behave at the upcoming wedding of his nephew and a Korean woman:

> STERN: You can absolutely go to the wedding, but you must eat with chopsticks, and wear a kimono, to prove now——
> QUIVERS: And bow—bow a lot.
> STERN: Yeah, now Jimmy has to like prove for the rest of his life that he's not anti——
> BRESLIN: Oh, I can't, you know, I go the other way there, and I can't do that. I have to—I mean, if they expect one thing from me I must do another.
> STERN: It's all been downhill since Pearl Harbor, Jimmy. (tremendous laughter)
>
> . . .
>
> STERN: . . . I'm calling *Newsday*, and I want to tell them that they should now print the newspaper in Chinese.
> BRESLIN: Well, that's your prerogative as a——
> STERN: Because after all they have to apologize every—there should be no apologies issued. Let me just say this, Jimmy——
> BRESLIN: Well, all my apologies, however, are carbons.
>
> . . .
>
> STERN: So this punk reporter, she decides——
> BRESLIN: My wife didn't even have a suit straightened out for me—and what, you should beat her with a stick (garbled). I mean, I've had it.
> QUIVERS: (laughs)

After Breslin was suspended for two weeks, his fellow columnists on *Newsday* rallied round. Murray Kempton had a mild reproof for him ("a great offense") but hurried on to the charge that Yuh herself had perpetrated "no small offense" in passing her complaints along to the editor. This was "finkery" to be set against Breslin's "indecency" in hurling his slanders "within non-consensual earshot of his colleagues." I don't quite understand the "non-consensual" in that sentence. Would it have been O.K. if everyone had applauded Breslin's language and shouted for more?

Robert Reno, another *Newsday* regular, wrote a pompous column in support of Breslin ("a great voice has been stilled, an original mind has been pastured for two weeks"), ending somewhat in the Kemptonian manner, with a quote from Rosa Luxemburg intended to buttress Reno's conclusion that the suspension was a victory for the forces of conformism. Sidney Schanberg pulled Breslin's hair a bit ("this gifted, boorish, compassionate, insulting, bully-defying bully") and then went after the real villain in his story, the electronic computer message ("It imbues in the sender a psychological distance one cannot enjoy in a face-to-face talk"). From Harvard, Marvin Kalb, formerly of CBS, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "This [punishment] carries with it risks that are deeper than the possible affront to an individual. . . . You get to the point where people . . . are going to be so concerned about not offending somebody that . . . they will all end up sounding the same. And it's going to be an awfully boring world."

In these versions Breslin's bigotry ends up as the antithesis of conformism and boredom. The columnists never traversed such arcs of sensitivity about Jesse Jackson. Kempton and Anthony Kornheiser, a *Washington Post* columnist supportive of Breslin, were also keen to stress the virtues of the old *Front Page* newsroom, rich with the fumes of tobacco, alcohol and man-to-man talk. One should be cautious about nostalgia for the old-style newsroom, where damaged people churned out drivel in conditions—aesthetic and disciplinary—markedly inferior to a Roman slave galley. The modern newsroom is awful in a more tactful way. The disciplinary structures are the same—no institution is more rigidly hierarchical than a newspaper—and instead of the smoke-wreathed drunks hunched over their Underwoods, you see something resembling a slightly untidy insurance office: subdued individuals peering into their terminals and muttering into telephones, with the prevailing noise being the rustle of fingers on processor keys, like rats' feet scuttling along a polished floor. In the old newsroom they probably wouldn't have heard Breslin over the clatter of typewriters, and if they had they wouldn't have cared.

Today, according to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, there are 56,900 full-time newsroom supervisors, copy editors, reporters and photographers on dailies. Only 4,500—7.8 percent—are minorities: 2,375 black, 1,227 Hispanic, 715 Asian-American, 153 Native American. Let Ji-Yeon Yuh have the last word on liberalism, from a *Newsday* column of May 16:

> Jimmy Breslin excused his racist and sexist tirade against me . . . by citing his record of championing civil rights. . . . [This] is what I call arm's-length equality. The Great American Liberals see us as equal enough to be hired, championed, even befriended, but not equal enough to be respected, promoted all the way to the top, or accepted into the inner circle of confidants. . . . Not until the arm's-length equality of the Great American Liberal is a relic of the past will New York and the rest of America be truly free of racism. For as long as liberals think they can get away with racist and sexist slurs and attitudes, die-hard racists and sexists will think they can get away with rape and murder.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

■ Puff the Magic *Contra*

Better late than never. *The New York Times*, via a magazine article by hound-dog reporter Seymour Hersh, recently went on record suggesting that the Congressional Iran/*contra* committees consciously decided not to go after President Reagan and the full story. This is an obvious point, well documented by Hersh, but one that could have been made by the *Times* back in 1987. It was clear to many who sat through the hearings and grimaced as the nation's lawmakers asked dumb and inconsequential questions. I'll never forget how the reputedly brainy Sam Nunn told me, in the first blush of Oliver North's popularity, that the colonel's undoing would come when he would have to explain how he used those infamous traveler's checks to purchase snow tires. No doubt Nunn is now poring over the 1,400 uncensored pages of North's diaries recently released in response to a lawsuit filed by the National Security Archive and the Public Citizen Litigation Group. Some of those pages were examined and made available by the committees, but many contained deletions dictated by the White House or North's lawyers.

The most intriguing entry mentions a previously undisclosed, and still unexplained, meeting between North and George Bush on August 6, 1986, a day when North was busily working on both the Iranian arms deal and his secret *contra* supply network. Bush has insisted he was basically out of the loop on each of these. The diaries are full of other tantalizing jottings, trivial and significant. A July 1985 note lists the dates of several concerts, including those by Peter, Paul and Mary, and Harry Belafonte. (Did North have a secret passion for the music of the old left?) On November 11, 1986, North discussed with Amiram Nir, the Israeli counterterrorist chief, how the American Israel Public Affairs Committee might be used to defuse the public criticism of the Iran initiative. On April 13, 1985, North scribbled some notes on a meeting that day with retired Maj. Gen. John Singlaub. "Arrange for explosion in earshot of ROC embassy," one line appears to read. Was there a plan for a concussion near a Taiwanese mission somewhere? The general maintains that he hasn't "the foggiest idea what it means." "Unfortunate" is too generous a word to characterize the committees' neglect of key passages in the secret life of Oliver North.

■ He's No Statistician

Like North, Dan Quayle has never been known to let facts get in the way of zealotry. At the recent antiabortion rally in Washington, Quayle asserted that ever since the *Roe v. Wade* decision, there has been "a dramatic increase in other forms of mistreatment of children: abuse, abandonment, exploitation in pornography and prostitution."

Days after Quayle's tirade, my colleague Jody Berger called his press secretary and asked politely for the evidence to back up the Veep's claim. A testy David Beckwith snapped back, "It's common knowledge." He then rattled off a list of government agencies and private groups that could supply the proof. The experts at several of those offices maintain there is no way one can reasonably assert that the incidence of child abuse and abandonment is up. The remarks of David Lloyd, project director of the National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, are typical: "We don't know if general incidence is up. We do know that reports of abuse are up dramatically, but that's due to increased prevention efforts. Kids are encouraged to tell of abuse, and health care workers, child care providers, teachers and social workers are mandated to report abuse. . . . Incidence may be up because of population growth." Ernest Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (N.C.M.E.C.), says that it is impossible to tell if the number of abandoned kids has changed. As for child porn and prostitution, there are no hard data, says John Rabun, vice president of N.C.M.E.C. The kids most vulnerable to sexual exploitation, he adds, are runaways, and a new Justice Department study concludes that their number is about the same as it was in 1975.

What has increased, and this over the past ten years, is the number of children abducted by family members: 354,000 in 1988 according to the Justice Department. That is, Allen notes, "a comment on the state of American families; there are more dysfunctional families, single parents and broken homes." So ever since the pro-family/antiabortion Republicans have been in the White House . . .

■ First Gun Control, Then Camps

Extremism in the service of rhetoric is no vice in Washington. At a conference of the Edison Electric Institute, the electrical utilities lobby, Representative Newt Gingrich calculated that "35 percent of the environmental movement is just stupid; their solutions are essentially socialism." He complained that the United States is "the last stand of centralizing bureaucracy and socialism."

For John Snyder of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms the greater worry is the rise of a Nazi-like (and gun-banning) regime in the United States. He testified before a House subcommittee considering a bill, introduced by Representative Larry Smith, to outlaw Saturday Night Specials. Gun fans who argue that handgun ownership is a necessary check on the power of government have a point. It may not be convincing, but it's worth a listen. Somehow, though, their leaders cannot present it without appearing to be nuts. Snyder quoted a statement issued by Aaron Zelman, founder of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership: "Gun-hate legislation is creating anti-Semitism in America." Zelman frets that right-wing populists and white supremacist groups blame Jews for trying to disarm America. Zelman continues: "In Nazi Germany, the government, the media and the police worked together to destroy Jews. Today in America, elements of the same forces are combining their best efforts to destroy gun ownership. I implore Mr. Smith not to create further ill will against Jews." As my grandmother might have said, that's one *meshuggeneh* Jew.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Unexpected Merits of Oppression

IVAN KLIMA

In the last twenty years, when I was not allowed to publish, people would ask me, How could a writer create under such circumstances? This question was asked both by people at home and by colleagues and journalists who came from the free part of the world. I shall try to answer this, but let me stress that I speak first of all about my own experience, because, as you know, the more extreme the situation in which people find themselves, the more individual are their reactions. Therefore one cannot generalize too much.

An author who is prohibited to publish finds himself in a paradoxical situation. Quite often he is attracted to writing precisely because of the possibility to speak to people, to influence them in one way or another, or at least to tell them something. Those who try to deny the author this possibility place him in the situation of a high school student who writes a diary merely for himself or makes a few copies of it for classmates.

If we talk about the prohibition of publishing in particular and about the persecution of the free word in general, we should realize that censorship can have quite different forms and, above all, quite different intensities. We know well how Hitler, Stalin and their lesser likes treated troublesome authors. We also know that another dictator quite recently did not hesitate to sentence to death a distant writer whose work offended him. Whenever, as the result of free expression, an author's life is threatened, creativity itself is threatened in its very essence. The injunction that affected me and some hundred of my colleagues in Czechoslovakia in the last twenty years was of a different kind. Throughout this period we were more or less free to write and even to publish abroad. The authorities tried to make my life difficult: The police searched my home illegally; I was subjected to demeaning interrogations; my passport was canceled, and from time to time my driver's license as well; and my phone was disconnected whenever it was not bugged. But I did not feel that my life was threatened. I think that in this respect my experience resembled that of the other prohibited authors. Yet in one respect my fate was different. Because I was published frequently enough abroad, I could have lived as a writer; I did not, like many of my colleagues, have to seek full-time employment to win my bread. I would like to stress that the prohibited authors could hold only the most menial of jobs—they worked as porters, watchmen, window washers, in construction and, if lucky, as warehouse clerks. Obviously, for many authors, especially the older ones, this was a serious interference with their creative work. Nevertheless, in those twenty years it was precisely the prohibited literature that produced over 1,000 titles, among them the best works of our letters. This is a testament to the moral strength of Czech writers, or at least to their dedication—I do not like the word "mission"—to their occupation.

In a seeming paradox, the prohibition to publish brought for many a liberation.

I started by saying that I will speak mainly of myself. In those bad but in some ways also peaceful times, I wrote a number of books and plays, essays and journalistic pieces. Critics usually consider this part of my *oeuvre*, produced in the past twenty years, better than what I had written prior to the injunction on being published. Though it is quite unusual when an author agrees with the critics, in this case they are right. I think that I was well equipped for the situation in which I found myself after 1970.

I was lucky enough to have spent my war youth mostly in a concentration camp. The word "luck" is not a slip of the tongue; from my juvenile experience I gained important knowledge. First of all, if man wants to survive in the situation of immediate threat, he must adapt himself, must accept even the worst circumstances as a given and then strive even within this context to continue his human existence. In the camp this meant to maintain my human dignity and mental balance: to save my inner world, my hope, my inner freedom, never to succumb to panic or despair. Those who did not manage this were lost! Second, and less important, I learned that man accepts such circumstances as given, but only for a particular moment. He continues to hope that the situation will change, that madness cannot be the permanent state of human or social existence. We were surviving also because we believed (with an exaggerated optimism) that the war would end within a couple of weeks or months. Finally, during the war I gained an important insight into my own profession. For the writer there is no useless experience—quite the contrary. The more hideous his experience, the more extreme the situation he enters, the more beneficial it is for his future work.

I would say that all this knowledge helped me in those twenty years, and that most of my colleagues arrived at it as well. Although we believed that the insane decision to forbid basically the entire contemporary body of Czech literature could be only a temporary measure that could last only a few years, we also had to accept this decision as given, weigh the circumstances and act accordingly. Only a few yielded to despair, and even fewer of us were willing to meet halfway an authority that from the very beginning acted openly against culture and against the basic interests of the nation. The majority of Czech authors retained their inner freedom. In a seeming paradox, the prohibition to publish brought for many a liberation: the liberation from all the secondary influences and interests, from the self-censorship which they had been practicing in a hope that they might cheat the vigilant supervisors, and from the interests of the market as well. The writer continued in his or her work if he or she felt it an existential necessity, and only then. But is it possible to write forever,

Ivan Klima, the newly elected president of PEN in Czechoslovakia, is the author of My Merry Mornings *(Reader's International) and* My First Loves *(Norton). This essay is adapted from a speech he delivered at a recent conference on Czech literature and culture sponsored by the International Research & Exchanges Board and New York University.*

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to create forever, without the hope that the results of all the effort will become known to more than just a few of one's friends?

Long before the informal organizations like the now-famous Charter 77, in whose creation many of the prohibited writers and journalists participated, came into being, Czech *samizdat* was spontaneously established. By chance I witnessed its birth, and thus I know of the self-defensive mechanism that propelled it, the drive to act normally in an abnormal situation. Already in the early 1970s, when our books began to disappear from the libraries and when it became clear that none of the prohibited ones would be allowed to print a single line, we decided to meet once a month and read to one another from our new works. The meetings took place in my apartment, and its size dictated the number of participants—about forty people. Soon the police became interested in those meetings and the house where I lived began to appear on the TV screen, with the commentary hinting darkly at the conspiracy of some antisocialist forces. We were forced to replace our meetings with something less visible and at the same time more effective, which could go beyond the limits of our friendly group. In this way we came to the idea of reproducing individual works on a typewriter, making as many copies as possible, and selling these at cost. The first series, whose editor was one of our best and most original writers, Ludvik Vaculik, gained its fame under the name "Edition Padlock." It was christened this way because on the New Year's card that Vaculik was sending around the year he established his series he had drawn the backs of a few books already published under a padlock. Surely at that time he did not suspect that some 500 titles would be published in his series alone until 1989. Soon after, series similar to Vaculik's began to crop up, the most famous among them the one organized by Vaclav Havel's wife and brother, Olga and Ivan. There were more and more copyists, often voluntary, and the books once bound by the commercial, state-owned enterprises began to be made by volunteers. Also, the format of the manuscripts was soon reduced, and some of the books were provided with excellent graphic design. In a few years the treasures of Czech literature were published in this way, the works of the country's greatest living poets, the subsequent Nobel Prize laureate Jaroslav Seifert, Jan Skacel, Oldrich Mikulasek, and the writings of Bohumil Hrabal and Havel. But there were also a good deal of translated titles, from Martin Heidegger and Buber to Orwell, Erich Fromm, Mircea Eliade, Solzhenitsyn, Konrad Lorenz, Czeslaw Milosz and George Konrad. The manuscripts in circulation were copied anew, especially those of the famous and popular writers. We estimated that some of these *samizdat* titles reached many hundreds of editions.

You might think that I am going into too many technical details. However, the fact that his or her work was published at least in this form was, for the writer, extremely important. Not only did the work receive some reaction from readers, but quite often this mode of publication gave the writer a feeling of satisfaction. We knew that our books had a relatively wide circulation, especially among the young. In my library I have a few of these books with their covers marked by the hands of hundreds of readers. And we knew that for them this literature was the only authentic voice of Czech culture, the voice of honor, resistance, the voice of hope. Paradoxically, the forbidden authors, whether Vaclav Havel, Ludvik Vaculik, Karel Pecka, Milan Kundera, Josef Skvorecky, or Jiri Grusa, Jaroslav Seifert, Jan Skacel or Pavel Kohout, were more popular and, above all, enjoyed more respect than the official authors lavished with honorifics, prizes and titles. As I half-jokingly told my Western colleagues occasionally, the prohibited author in Czechoslovakia achieved something of which an author in a free society often only dreams: His or her word was waited for, and its meaning and resonance sometimes transcended what the author was actually communicating. And while dealing with these technical details I must not forget to mention that from the mid-1970s on, the newly established émigré publishing houses had begun to print in Czech not only the exile literature but also the titles written at home. Men and women like the Skvoreckys, Alexander Tomsky and Adolf Müller published hundreds of books, thousands of copies of which were smuggled into Czechoslovakia, where they enjoyed equal if not greater popularity than the typewritten editions.

Often I am asked what kind of books appeared in our *samizdat*, which was quite different from the similar efforts in other countries where the freedom of expression was suppressed. Elsewhere, the bulk of the *samizdat* production consist-

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ed of books rejected by the official publisher because of their political or critical content. In Czechoslovakia the situation was different. For the group that came to power after the invasion of 1968, any public activity, publishing included, was predicated on the acceptance of the foreign occupation. Because for most of the writers this condition was unacceptable, a total ban was imposed on more than two generations of authors, regardless of the content of their work. For this reason, in Czech *samizdat* there coexist side by side a historical novel set in the fourteenth century and love stories, the nature lyric, philosophical essays and works dealing with the sad fate of contemporary society. The Czech *samizdat*, in contrast with that of most other similar movements, represented not some secondary tributary to the river of national literature but its mainstream.

Havel probably would never have produced most of his plays had he not been pushed constantly to the bottom.

I was also often asked how could I bear, psychologically, my total isolation, the fact that I was excluded from all social activities, barred from traveling and even from entering the buildings of some publishing houses and the writer's club. I answered truthfully that the writer is always isolated, to some extent, by the reclusive nature of the profession. Yes, sometimes the burden of loneliness was quite heavy; but at other times I appreciated the possibility of total concentration it made possible. The time when, with the exception of a few friends and Western journalists, nobody interrupted my work appears almost idyllic to me today (especially after the last few hectic months) as far as the possibility of concentration is concerned. Besides that, my isolation was never total. The persecution and prohibition put most of us into situations and milieus that would otherwise have remained unknown to us. A number of my themes, and my knowledge of reality, came about only because I had to work as a paramedic, messenger, surveyor's helper, and for a few days as a street sweeper. Vaclav Havel would have surely never written his excellent *Audience* had he not been a worker in a brewery, and he probably would never have produced most of his plays if he had not been pushed constantly to the bottom, to the prison cell. In general I might say that the man who is being pushed to the bottom does not remain alone, because there are others in a similar situation, and this fact creates a strong feeling of solidarity. This solidarity—and I am aware that I am lauding oppression perhaps too much—was for us a great asset, profit and discovery of the last twenty years. I was joined not only by those who suffered in the same way I did but also by others, especially younger people who, though working in different professions, felt equally affected by what they considered most essential: the loss of civic freedom, the communal denigration to which all of us were subjected by the government. These people were interested in my books as much as in my fate. I will even venture to say that in those years I had more of a personal contact with my readers than ever before.

Furthermore, I experienced equally important external solidarity in those

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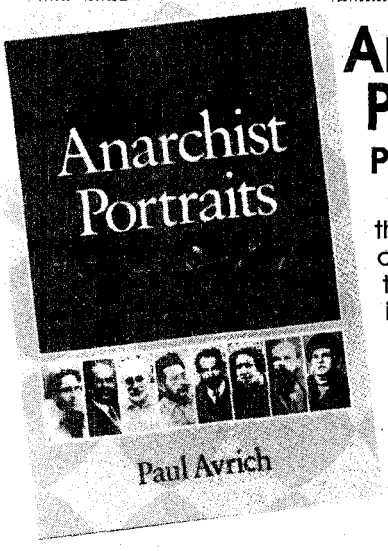

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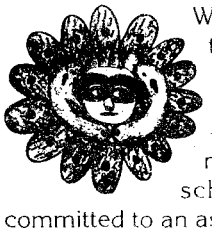

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years. The authorities treated us as nonbeings, noncitizens. Not only did they erase us from literature but they tried to break us as well. If we complained, we would not receive an answer; if we needed an official document, we would not get it. If such a situation lasts for too long, it exacts its toll from a human being: It can provoke bitterness, break one's self-esteem or, on the contrary, trigger excessive spitefulness and pride in one's exclusivity. I would like to emphasize, precisely in this context, that the representatives of several countries, despite all the official agreements and the diplomatic protocol, extended to us their sympathies, their support and their interest, and offered us their helping hand whenever needed. These were the representatives of the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom. I would like especially to recollect the period of Mr. William Luers's ambassadorship in Prague; it was on his initiative that prominent American writers visited our republic. The meetings with William Styron and his wife, Rose, with John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, E.L. Doctorow, Galway Kinnell and others, as well as with Mr. and Mrs. Luers, represented for us above all entry into the free world, a moment of exultation that imbued us with the strength to persevere, enhanced our hope.

At the beginning of my talk I said that for the writer no situation is bad enough that it does not provide something positive from which to draw for the work. It is only necessary that he or she survive this bad situation, physically and mentally. I am convinced that the last twenty years inspired in Czech literature many remarkable writers; but I also know that these years destroyed many talented authors whose spiritual or corporeal constitution was too fragile to endure all the suffering without consequences. Once, in a friendly polemic with Philip Roth, I defended a view that great literary work can be written even when freedom is lacking, under conditions such as those we had in our country. I am sure that you understand I was not defending totalitarianism. I strove by all I have written—we all strove by what we have done—for freedom. The moment of achieving it, as I hope, last fall was one of the happiest in my life. I am convinced that the literature or culture in general that came about despite all the persecution, injunctions and silencing helped to bring forth what is known today around the world as the

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Velvet Revolution. This culture not only postulated the goals that the revolution fulfilled but, above all, together with the immaculate student youths imbued it with its peaceful character and its truly humanistic content. □

Glasnost for Women?

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

SOVIET WOMEN: Walking the Tightrope. *By Francine du Plessix Gray. Doubleday. 208 pp. $19.95.*

A WEEK LIKE ANY OTHER. *By Natalya Baranskaya. Translated by Pieta Monks. Seal Press. 231 pp. Paper $9.95.*

Seventy-three years after the Russian Revolution, Soviet women are confronting a powerful backlash against its emancipation of women. *Glasnost* is allowing Soviet citizens to voice patriarchal prejudices once banned as bourgeois or counterrevolutionary. The state-controlled news media, for example, frequently blame "overemancipated, masculinized women" for social ills from juvenile delinquency to divorce. And Mikhail Gorbachev's ambivalent positions on the role of women in political and economic life, along with the social policies proposed by the Communist Party and the Congress of People's Deputies earlier this year, further strengthen the view that only women are responsible for children and housework.

So far, *perestroika* has failed to change Soviet women's secondary position in the work force or shorten their second shift at home. Measures proposed by the Communist Party to "improve the working and living conditions of women," for example, will allow women to work fewer hours a week; release them from heavy work and labor injurious to their health (usually the highest-paying jobs); and increase prenatal, maternal and workplace-funded leave for mothers of large families and single mothers. These policies, however generous and necessary, fail to address the fundamental inequalities women suffer. Official discussions of women's double burden rarely extend to men's family responsibilities—or consider society's responsibility for family welfare. The idea of parental, as opposed to maternal, leave was unthinkable until this year. (In April the Supreme Soviet passed a resolution which for the first time allows "fathers, grandfathers or other family members" the right to take unpaid child care leave.)

Why is this happening in a country that produced the first woman ambassador and the first woman in space? The Soviet Union contains the largest number of women professionals and specialists on the globe, and close to 90 percent of its female population is in the work force. Early Soviet legislation sought to secure full economic and social equality for women. They were to be employed in the public sector as a condition of complete equality, and the responsibility for housework and child care was to shift from the individual household to the collective. But the disruptions of war, large-scale unemployment, rampant inflation and Stalin's conservative social policies meant that few resources were devoted to social programs. Although opportunities for women in the labor force expanded, the socialization of housework never took shape.

As a result, many Soviet women express yearning for a traditional female role centered around the family and the home. They are exhausted by decades of paper equality and a double burden made more difficult by consumer shortages (a recent Soviet survey shows that 275 billion hours, equal to 90 percent of the time devoted to paid work in the national economy as a whole, are spent on shopping, child care and housework each year, most of it spent by women). Yet recent national polls show that only 20 percent of Soviet women would quit their jobs even if they could afford to. And most Soviet women, like their American counterparts, still need to work full time in order to make ends meet. Other women, fewer in number but increasingly vocal, are taking advantage of increased opportunities for political and social activism. Some are even espousing Western-style feminism, as they understand it.

Francine du Plessix Gray set out in 1987 to capture a society in flux through the voices of its women. She admits to a dual purpose: to examine "the first community of women in history to be officially emancipated" and to decode "the forceful spell that Russian women

Katrina vanden Heuvel is co-author, with Stephen F. Cohen, of Voices of Glasnost *(Norton) and is an editor at large of* The Nation.

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have had on me for much of my life" (Gray was raised in Paris by a Russian mother, grandmother and governess). Her nostalgia for the cozy and aristocratic milieu of her Russian maternal relatives may have led her to talk mainly to educated, urban, "successful" women. There are no rural women, or engineers or scientists in *Soviet Women* (although there are many doctors, a more traditional female occupation), and only a few token workers. Her portraits of women in their homes, at work or in hospitals and clinics are always meticulously observed and often lyrical. A distinguished writer of fiction and nonfiction, Gray tells these women's stories like a novelist.

The strength of Gray's book is its reporting on how women are being affected by a deteriorating health care system. Gray hears stories about the brutal treatment of women during childbirth. On visits to several hospitals, she documents the primitive conditions: the unchanged, blood-smeared sheets on nursing mothers' beds, the lack of bathing facilities and the patients' shabby, prisonlike hospital gowns. Men are not allowed to visit their wives or children for fear that they will infect them. The great irony of the Soviet Union's backwardness in the field of gynecology is that the technique of prepared childbirth had originated there several decades ago (the Frenchman who introduced it to the West, Dr. Lamaze, had actually learned it in the Soviet Union in the early 1950s from two Soviet doctors, Platonov and Velkovskii). Today the Lamaze method is virtually unheard of in the Soviet Union, and women have little or nothing to say about the conduct of their labor. According to Gray, only one clinic in the Soviet Union, in the more westernized Baltic Republic of Latvia, practices family birthing techniques.

Abortion is the primary method of birth control—not by choice but because of the absence of reliable contraceptives (diaphragms come in only two sizes, and condoms are called *galoshi*, which means just what it sounds like). There are four to eight abortions, depending on whose statistics you trust, for every live birth. The conditions in abortion clinics that Gray describes are now being graphically detailed in the Soviet press. Last year, for example, *Moscow News* published an account of one woman's ordeal under the headline, "I Don't Want to Be Sorry I'm a Woman." The author, Yekaterina Nikolayeva, recalled her experience in an abortion clinic. A doctor yelled at her for staring at his bloodstained gloves and scolded another woman by saying, " 'You should have had second thoughts before. You're all fond of sweets, but you're not willing to pay the price.' "

The article led the highest-ranking woman in the Soviet government, Aleksandra Biryukova, to order a Health Ministry investigation. She promised that the contraceptive industry would radically increase its output over the next two years. But Biryukova's call for change will not be easily answered. The Soviet reproductive health system needs radical restructuring before it can serve women humanely and effectively, and the lack of contraceptives is not the only problem. Family-planning programs are almost nonexistent and have no way to counter widespread beliefs that contraceptives are unreliable, dangerous or unobtainable. (No sex education materials designed for women are readily available now, but next year Progress Publishers may publish *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.)

Unlike the abortion debate in the West, which pits the putative rights of the fetus against women's right to choose, the Soviet discussion is about women's health care—the right to adequate supplies of

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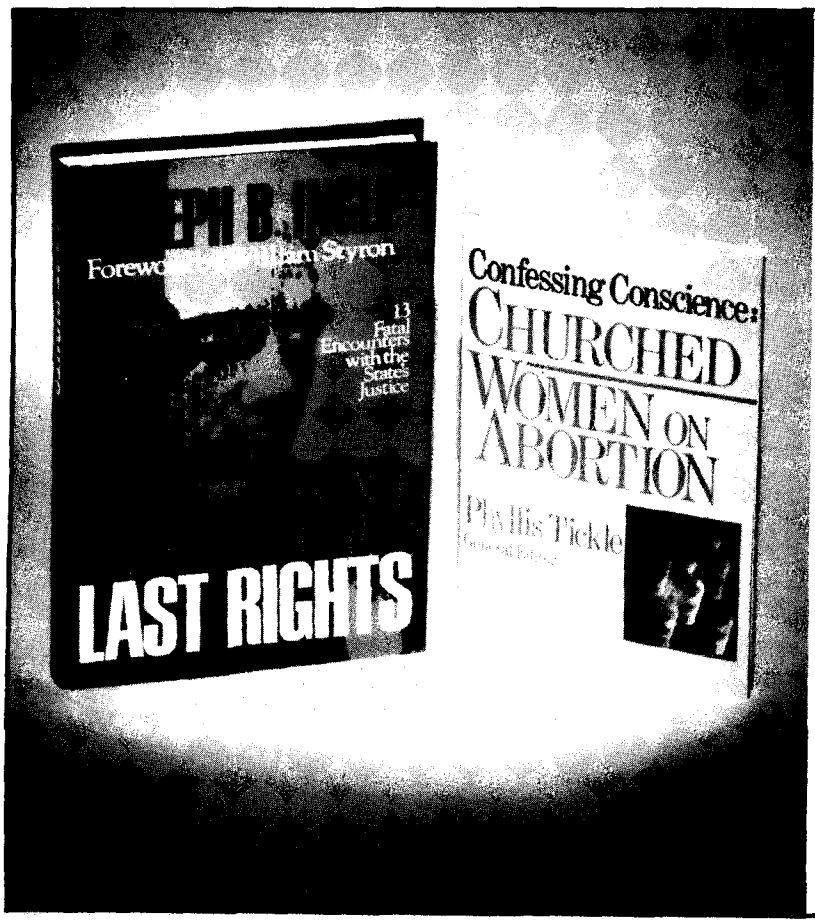
reliable contraceptives, sanitary conditions, anesthetics and the respect of medical workers. As of now, there is no national debate in the Soviet Union about the morality of abortion. But rising ethnic tensions in the Russian Republic and in the Caucasus, for example, could open that issue because they strengthen patriarchal religions which have a dim view of women. (A similar phenomenon is occurring in Poland, where the Catholic Church is trying to use its influence with Solidarity to curtail abortion and the availability of contraceptives.)

Few Soviet sexologists (a surprisingly busy and esteemed specialty) will discuss homosexuality, and decades of cultural isolation from the West and of repressive laws have insured that sexual attitudes remain reactionary. (Although lesbianism was never officially outlawed, homosexuals have been jailed for up to eight years under a statute that, according to press reports, is likely to be repealed this year.) But there have been glimmers of opposition. In December 1979 a group of Leningrad women issued a *samizdat* publication, *Almanac: Women and Russia*. It was the first self-consciously feminist text produced in the Soviet Union since the early 1920s, and its half-dozen contributors wrote about the flaws of Soviet gynecology, the scarcity of consumer goods and the general overburdening of women, problems that are aired today by numerous women in the *glasnost* press. What was unusual about *Almanac* was its accounts of lesbian relationships, a reality of Soviet life that is only now being acknowledged (albeit euphemistically and grudgingly).

Ten years earlier, in November 1969, Natalya Baranskaya's novella *A Week Like Any Other* was published in the prestigious literary journal *Novy Mir*. (It has just been published in English, along with several of Baranskaya's short stories, by Seal Press.) Written in the form of a week's diary entries, it details the nightmare of one woman's daily life: food shortages, endless lines, poor health care and day care, the lack of basic household services and a husband who buries himself in the TV or newspapers and never lifts a finger. When he suggests to Olga, a young scientist, that she stop working and stay home to take care of the family (a familiar proposal these days), she is appalled: "You want to shut me in here for the whole year! How could we live on your salary! . . . All this boring stuff is for me alone, and the only interesting things are for you!" Olga's story touched a raw nerve; Baranskaya received hundreds of letters from grateful women thanking her for telling the truth about their lives.

That was twenty years ago; it's taken women that long to get started. Since 1989 there has been an upsurge of independent (that is, outside party control) activism by women. And although there are still no signs of a mass movement, independent women's associations have emerged around the country. But *Soviet Women* doesn't take these developments into account. (To be fair, things are changing so rapidly in the Soviet Union these days that many books are outdated by the time they are published.) Gray writes that women are "hindered from cohesive action, to this day, by their government's censure of any 'feminist' movement that would function outside of party control . . . and by their curious lack of solidarity." Her comment that during her travels she "barely found two" other feminists is difficult to understand. One evening last December I sat in a newspaper office in Moscow and listened to twenty women from eight different independent associations define what fem-



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inism meant to them. Many were in their 20s, contradicting Gray's view that the younger generation has lost contact with feminist traditions. In fact, the emerging women's associations are composed of women of different ages and different political and professional orientations.

In Moscow, Olga Voronina and a group of women scholars have established the League for Society's Liberation from Stereotypes (LOTOS), which is beginning to articulate a gender analysis of Soviet society. Olga Bessolova has revived a once dormant Women's Council in the Aerohydrodynamics Institute in Zhukovsky, sixty kilometers from Moscow. She has organized a Women's Initiative Club, which lobbies the town government for better services and holds bimonthly consciousness-raising meetings, and an Inter-Regional Women's Political Club, which organizes political training workshops for women and nominates women to run in local and national races. Last January I attended one of the Initiative Club's meetings. Forty women—professionals, scholars, journalists, engineers and factory workers—gathered for four hours. These women believe that the solution to the "women's question" lies not in the improvement of consumer goods and services but in the redefinition of male and female social roles.

One month earlier, a federation of women writers was formed inside the Russian Writer's Union, and women filmmakers and journalists have started lobbying groups to fight for higher pay and better working conditions. (The Soviet Union still has only one female foreign correspondent.) In March several women formed a women's center in Moscow which will offer legal consultation as well as political leadership training. In Leningrad, Elena Zelinskaya, who heads a women's cooperative association and the Northwest Information Agency, a network of independent journalists in Leningrad, was recently appointed to chair the City Council Commission on Communication. In Uzbekistan (where Gray interviews a "narcissistic Communist official" and a "Dragon Lady"), Rozika Mergenbaeva makes documentaries about the appalling conditions under which women and girls work in the cotton fields.

More disturbing than these omissions is Gray's conclusion, presented early in the book, that "the Soviet Union might be as much in need of a men's movement as of a women's movement." She tries the idea out on some of her Soviet friends and finds it "very well received." But the women Gray asks, and who inform this book, are almost exclusively strong and successful women who live with either their mothers or children or with passive, emasculated men, whom they deride in Gray's presence. As someone who has traveled regularly to the Soviet Union in the past ten years, I'd say the country has had a men's movement all along; only now are women's concerns emerging on the fringes of the male-dominated political and cultural outpourings that characterize *glasnost*. What kind of matriarchy pays its female workers two-thirds of the average male income, gives women the dirty manual jobs while insuring that they cannot reach the top of the professions and then blames "masculinized" women for every social problem?

Gray emerges as a kind of romantic feminist, accepting the view, so popular among the Soviet intelligentsia and political elite, that Soviet women have an essence that is indisputably different from that of men. "In this laboratory of emancipation offered us by the Soviet Union," Gray concludes, "in this epochal experiment which has engaged women in the work force longer and more fully than

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We keep the shutters drawn all afternoon
against the sun. It's the custom here.
Light filters through, wavery as water.
The sun's the enemy to beat. We trust
the seawall to hold the gulf, but drowning
is our fate. Be careful on these stairs.

I must catch my breath. It's the steep stairs
and the heat. I lie down in the afternoon,
the quiet so close it feels like drowning.
This climate robs all strength if you stay here
too long. When I arrived I was a trust-
ing girl whose only fear was the water.

That's your room, rose-papered and a water
view. How young you are to take the stairs
two at a time! You'll visit me, I trust,
in my room across the hall. Each afternoon
I rest from three to five. It's not uncommon here
to find solace in a dim room, drowning

until dinnertime. Of course the drownings
no one forgets were long ago. Water
swept the city down. Six thousand died here.
Their bodies were stacked high as stairs
and burned. The foul smoke turned afternoon
dark. To rebuild after that was a trust.

I've picked gardenias for your bedside. Don't trust
their scent. Breathed close, you will be drowning
in languor. A trap set to steal your afternoon.
Would you like refreshments? Rosewater,
perhaps, or wine? There's no one on the stairs.
Brandy, chocolates? We're quite sequestered here,

our rooms a refuge from the crowds here
in high summer. Port cities can't be trusted.
In this fancy street more than one stair
led to a brothel, nomad sailors drowning
in unimagined pleasures and watered-
down liquor. But this is *our* afternoon.

Here is your treat. Brandy in the afternoon.
You trusted our complicity on the stairs.
In this watery light we lie down as if drowned.

Isabel Nathaniel

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any society in history, the paradoxical 'equality' between the sexes may well symbolize a central dilemma of the human condition: the female's secret and ambivalent desire to lead and be led, the male's confusion and resentment before her mysterious force and her often awesome versatility." Throughout all levels of Soviet society, she writes, "one is constantly awed by women's keen sense of their greater patience, diligence, optimism, endurance, shrewdness and self-esteem—a self-esteem apparently heightened by the very arduousness of their everyday duties, their incessant foraging for basic necessities of food and clothing." Gray continues, "Many women I talked to prefer to remain exhausted, to continue complaining and to keep their husbands out of the kitchen, where 'it is not their place to be.' " Perhaps, she notes, this stance makes more sense if viewed in the great Russian literary tradition that depicts women's suffering as a redemptive force. In the end, she creates the same image of women created by Russian male authors in the nineteenth century: heroines considerably more powerful than their male counterparts. Those authors placed women on pedestals, the better to admire their suffering while keeping them in their place.

The structure of much of the book—small-scale, impressionistic pictures of women in their homes, with their children and, occasionally, "henpecked" husbands—places women in a traditional surrounding. This setting draws out Gray's novelistic skills, but women in any society have many sets of relationships. However, Gray doesn't seem interested in describing the public activities of women in Soviet society. As a result, there is often a static and passive quality to these women's lives. I wish Gray had asked more of them what they think they, or the Gorbachev government, could do to improve their living or working conditions.

In fact, women as active political figures do not figure in the book. When Gray does refer to the glaring absence of women in positions of high political authority, she doesn't discuss the structural shortcomings of a system that has produced only two women Politburo members in seventy-three years. Instead, she argues that Western feminists have "tended to put too much blame on men's sexist biases" to explain Soviet women's absence from the higher echelons of labor and politics. Soviet women, Gray implies, consider politics a dirty business, best left to men. "In the glasnost era," she writes,

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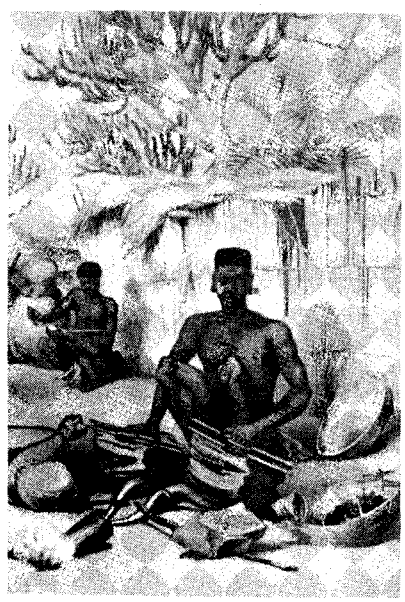

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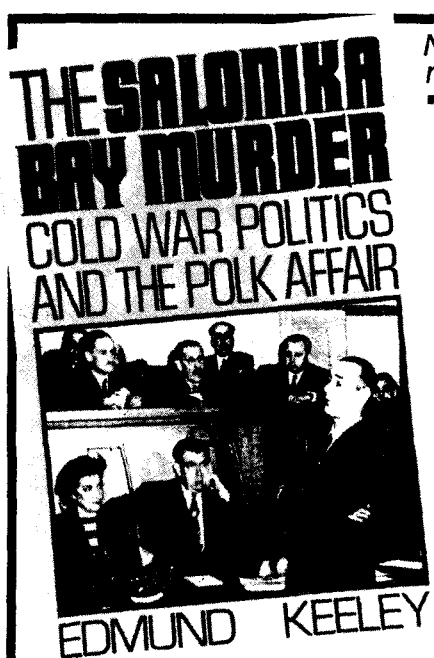

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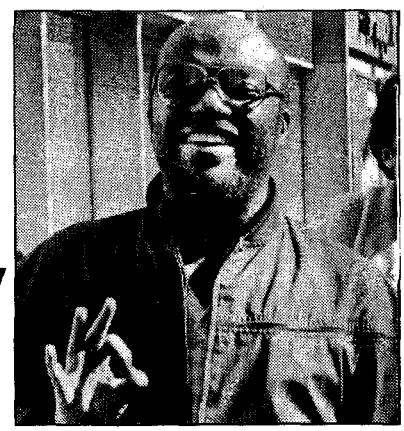

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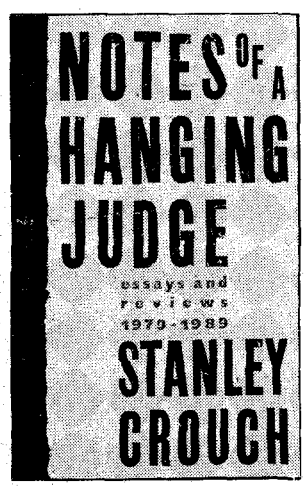

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Soviet women "often note, with a touch of irony and pride, that in view of the totalitarianism and moral debacle of past Soviet regimes . . . their skeptical reticence toward political power may have been prophetic." But the situation seems more complex. Consider that multicandidate elections last year, the freest since 1917, produced a Congress of People's Deputies in which fewer than 15 percent of the deputies are women, as compared with 33 percent under previous governments. And in the recent local elections to the Russian Republic's Parliament, the proportion of women elected dropped from 35.3 percent before the quotas were removed to 5.4 percent afterward. (A pre-election poll in *Argumenti i Fakti* last year showed that voters considered "being a man" one of the most important qualities in a candidate.) These alarming statistics have sparked a debate among women about developing affirmative action programs during this transitional period to help more women get into the grass-roots soviets, which are so important to the new political life of the country.

Class differences are as important in the Soviet Union as in the United States, but Gray's focus on women from the "intelligentsia" obscures rather than illuminates these differences. For example, several of the women she interviewed express the hope that private enterprise and cooperatives will offer better conditions for women, such as flexible hours and improved health care. But for millions of women, the implications of the market-style economic reforms are less appealing. Indeed, I have spoken to many women who worry that reforms like radical cuts in the 18-million-member bureaucracy will mean layoffs of support staffs—which consist almost entirely of women. They worry that cooperatives, which are more like profit-making limited partnerships than communal enterprises, are requiring workers to put in twelve hours a day, thereby excluding mothers unless they are able to work at home. Other reforms, such as work brigades, which were introduced as an incentive to make workers more productive, are leaving the disabled, older workers and women, who traditionally take more sick leaves because of responsibility for children, on the sidelines. In addition, when women try to take advantage of their legal rights to work fewer hours or on a part-time schedule, employers are reluctant to accommodate their requests, and women then often find

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themselves under pressure to quit. Since almost all benefits in Soviet society (housing, health care and pensions) revolve around one's job, women are worried that they may well become more dependent on their husbands or families as a result of the reforms.

Perhaps the only perceptible—and significant—benefit Gorbachev's reforms have brought to women is the freedom to organize, to address the inequalities in the system or, as a Soviet friend of mine puts it, "to let steam off." Olga Voronina, who helped form the independent group LOTOS, wrote last year, "In Western Europe and America women's movements have spent twenty years fighting for society to recognize their problems. Here we are only just beginning the process of democratization, and our issue cannot be resolved by decree. Until society changes its view of women and stops reducing their problems to goods shortages, nothing is going to change." □

The Day Bush Left

JOSEPH HELLER

"Politics, they're saying, stops at the water's edge."

"What's it mean, George?"

"I'm not sure I know. Charlie?"

"Maybe it has something to do with our borders, that we try to pretend we are unified in outlook and won't tolerate disagreement when it comes to foreign affairs."

"That's a funny thought," said the President, who was persisting to the end in his determination to resign. "But why water? Our borders north and south aren't water, are they? You see, Charlie, I've been learning my history."

"That's geography, George."

The three men sat flopped comfortably about the White House office, each looking and feeling looser than at any time since Election Eve. There were the President himself, his Secretary of State and his trusted friend Charlie Stubbs.

"Well, it doesn't really matter now that I'm leaving. Right? How many are there waiting to see me?"

"About a dozen. The leaders from both political parties in the House and the Senate, the chairmen and a few others from both national committees."

"My goodness, I didn't realize they all liked me that much," said President Bush.

"They don't like you at all, George. It's the idea of Quayle that appalls them. We think you should see them."

"Aaaaw, shoot. Jim, you talk to them first and prepare them for disappointment. Well, Charlie, what do you think?" George Bush asked when alone with Stubbs. "I have to stick to my decision, don't I?"

"Only if you're sick of the job and truly want to leave it. You've proved your point. You made it to the top and you are your own man. You're not much of a man, we know, but at least you're your own. So go ahead and resign if that's what you want."

"That's the only advice I've been given since I took office that seems to add up."

"And it's the only thing you've done that seems to make sense."

The President laughed like the good sport he was widely acknowledged to be. "I still have all this packing to finish. Give me a hand with some of these trophies and citations. Golly, there's a mess of them."

"You're taking them all?"

Bush: 'It was my idea to take Willie Horton into the State Department.'

"I wouldn't want to leave a dirty White House."

"You didn't mind conducting a dirty campaign, did you?"

"Wasn't that a beauty, Charlie?"

"Certainly the filthiest presidential campaign in my recollection, George."

"I doubt it will ever be surpassed. I think history will celebrate that as my highest achievement."

"What confounds me still, George, is that you could be the standard-bearer of the vilest, dirtiest, most ugly presidential campaign in modern history and still come out of it looking so squeaky clean. How can it be, George, that people still think you're basically decent, kind and gentle?"

"I have a thousand points of light."

Joseph Heller is at work on a new novel, from which this excerpt has been adapted.

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"And you did such a magical job between the day you were elected and the day you took office."

"I was good then, wasn't I?"

"You've never been better. Between the election and your inauguration you were dazzling, inspiring, charismatic, irreproachable. Your approval rating hit the top before you even took the oath."

"I should never have taken the oath."

"You'd be remembered as the most popular President in history if you'd never become one."

"I have to admit that's true," George Bush admitted. "Charlie, it's hard work, and tedious too. All that posing around for photographers every day. There are thousands of people who can do the job as well as I can. As far as I can tell, there's not much to it."

"But Dan Quayle isn't one of them. George, there's just no way in the world you're going to get anyone sensible to like him, not even if he turns into Willie Mays."

"It's funny you should say that," George Bush said and laughed. "Because for a time we were thinking of picking Willie Mays as my running mate."

"I can guess why you didn't." Stubbs nodded sagely. "It would have been hard to run that antiblack hate campaign if you had Willie Mays on the ticket."

"We didn't really run an antiblack hate campaign, Charlie," the President protested. "All we set out to do was reach those white people in the country who hate blacks. We figured if we could get our message to voters who are antiblack, we would get close to a hundred percent of the white vote. Willie Horton is the one we decided to concentrate on, not Willie Mays."

"And that's what dumbfounds me, George, how you were able to be up to your eyeballs in that cesspool of a campaign and still come crawling out of it smelling like a rose. No one held you to blame."

"That was neat, wasn't it? It *was* rather low, yes?"

"The lowest. You were spineless and shameless and you still are. You're a perfect hypocrite, George."

"Thank you, Charlie. I know you wouldn't say that just to flatter me."

"It comes from the heart."

"That's why I treasure it. It's easy to explain, Charlie. The American people love a winner."

"The press too?"

"Oh, they're the easiest. They don't really mind, even when they criticize. They love to be invited to anything official, even press conferences. Owners never get angry. They're very rich and can't afford to."

"Your managers must love you. You never say no to them, do you?"

"Only when they tell me to."

"I was amazed when——"

"I know. When even Willie Horton conceded on Election Night and sent me that telegram of congratulation."

"That was a nice gesture you made, George, granting him a presidential pardon."

"I felt I owed him that much. Especially since he hated that photograph we used. The way we designed it, Charlie, was to give the public the impression that other people in the background were making those dirty campaign decisions and I was just an innocent wimp doing and saying whatever they ordered me to, like some kind of dumb dodo."

"But isn't that pretty much the way it happened?"

"The Willie Horton thing was my idea."

"To focus on him?"

"To pardon him, and then to take him into the State Department as an Under

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Secretary for Latin American affairs. That's a very good post for a person who doesn't mind crime, Charlie. Latin America is just about the best place left where we can still get away with murder. You see, I've learned my geography too."

"That's history, George. George, what is there about you that convinces people you're not actually as bad and mean as the person who says and does all those bad and mean things you continually say and do? At times you're as bad as the worst, and you're always transparent."

"Thanks, Charlie. I think it's that daffy preppy style I have. And of course, there's my background at Yale."

"William Buckley has that."

"And I play dumb. That's where I'm smart. That's pretty easy for me."

"I didn't think it would be hard. So tell me, George. Now that we're nearing the end and you can speak freely." Stubbs paused. "Why did you pick him?"

"Don't ask me that again!" cried President George Bush, with a terrible wince that would have wrung with remorse the heart of a weaker man than his close friend Charlie Stubbs. "If I hear that question one more time I think I'll scream!"

"You are screaming," answered Charlie Stubbs. "George, today is your last full day in office, and God dammit, I want to know. You barely knew him. You didn't even know he'd been dodging the draft. What was the gimmick? Where was the catch?"

"There was none, darn it. There was no gimmick, no need for any kind of deal. How can I make you believe me?"

"I have trouble believing there is even such a person as this J. Danforth Quayle, even one."

"I liked the idea. I thought he'd be good. So there."

"Why didn't you ask someone?"

"I did, by God. Do you think I'm an idiot? I consulted with the best minds around me. They all said no."

"Then why did you do it?"

"To show those smart alecks I was my own man. By then I was sick and tired of living in Reagan's shadow."

"Don't take offense, George, but I believe I speak for the majority of mankind when I say you looked better in Reagan's shadow than you've looked since. Should I go?"

"No, stay. When those Congressmen come traipsing in to beg me to reconsider, I want you right up here beside me. The second you see me waver, speak out and stop me so they will see that I'm not so easily swayed once I'm reminded I shouldn't be. Bring them on. I feel like kicking some ass again."

"Oh, George, for Christ sakes!"

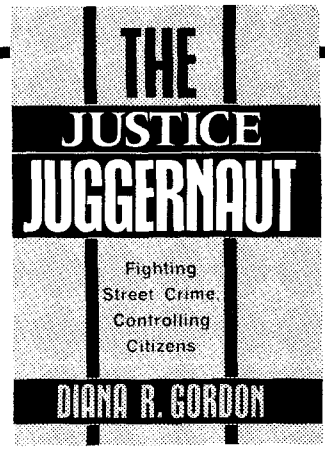
Stubbs was still wearing the wince of his own when the door was opened by the Secretary of State to admit the gentlemen in the delegation of supplicants from the Congress and from both national parties, who filed in singly, silently and somberly. They numbered ten in all. The greeting with which their President welcomed them was cordial.

"Come in, guys, come on in. Isn't this gorgeous weather we're having neat? What are you all looking so glum about? It's always darkest before the dawn, isn't it?"

"George," Charlie Stubbs admonished cautiously.

"Sorry, Charlie."

"Well, if I may begin," said the Secretary of State, "these gentlemen all respectfully recognize that your mind is made up, Mr. President, but they've come with pages of petitions signed by just about every member of both parties in both houses of Congress begging you to reconsider your decision to leave. And by now,



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I have received messages, some stained with tears, from leaders in just about every developed nation in the free world and in the communist world, and from most in the Third World too."

"Imagine that." George Bush beamed. "The Soviets too?"

"Of course. The message from the Soviet ambassador is one of those that is stained with tears. They no sooner want a nuclear war than we do."

"Well, fellas," said George Bush, in his nicest nice-guy mode, "I have to tell you candidly what I have already said in public. What I am doing is right, and while I am still the President, I am still the best person to tell other people what is right. Right? It is right because I have grown to realize—I have grown in office—that being President is something I'm really not cut out for."

"You will get no argument on that point, Mr. President," said a Congressional member from his own party.

"Call me George, Bob. I'm glad I've succeeded in convincing you."

"My name is John, George."

"My name is Bob," spoke up a tall man.

"So is mine," said a small one.

"It's good to get to know you all again," said George Bush. "I thought you didn't like what I was doing with my Administration, Bob."

"My name is Tom, George."

"I'm Bob, George, and I don't like what you've been doing, either. But politics must stop at the water's edge."

"What does that mean, Tom?"

"It means that in times of great crisis, Mr. President, we lay aside our partisan bickering and forget about the lousy job you've been doing while we think, for a change, of the public good."

"But why the water's edge?"

"I'm not sure. But that doesn't matter right now, any more than does the question of whether your lousy Administration has been lousier than Reagan's or not."

"Lousier than Reagan's?" Here the President perked up alertly. "Oh, no, we can't let that one pass. Let me make one thing clear. With me it's been mainly a matter of reserved presidential style, and you may not have noticed all of the good improvements we've been making steadily, along with many of the bad improvements."

"George," Stubbs said.

"In a minute, Charlie. We've been making many of these good and bad changes for the better so gradually that they just as well might not have been made at all for any difference they made, and we would have been much better off just leaving things as they were instead of wasting all that time and money making them. Now my agenda is complete, and the time has come for me to pass the torch and fade away."

"George," Stubbs admonished.

"Sorry, Charlie."

"What about Quayle, Mr. President? Will you tell us once and for all why you picked him?"

"If you ask him that he'll scream."

"Thank you, Charlie."

"You're leaving all of us in a lurch. What about the S.D.I.?"

"What's that?"

"Star Wars. Should we go ahead or shouldn't we? By the way, Mr. President, is this room bugged? Are you secretly recording everything for some future book you have in mind?"

'[Quayle] doesn't know if there's anything else he'd be much good at but leading the free world.'

"That suggestion is offensive," the President replied with asperity. "But let me give you the assurance you want." With long steps he strode to his desk and buzzed his secretary. "Primrose, please turn off all the recording equipment. And see that everything we've got is erased."

"Yes, Mr. President," a woman responded immediately. "Does that mean you want it left on?"

"No, I want it turned off."

"Now I understand, sir. But I think I've forgotten the code. You want it on?"

"I want it off. Just ask the sound engineer. Tell him I really want it off."

"Yes, Mr. President. But he's not sure of the code either. He's filling in."

"Oh, Primrose, just forget it, please forget I even asked." The President turned back with an exaggerated shrug. "And you guys are asking *me* about the S.D.I.? That thing is all too technical for the White House to decide, and we won't know what to do until we read the latest public opinion polls."

"Does he know that?"

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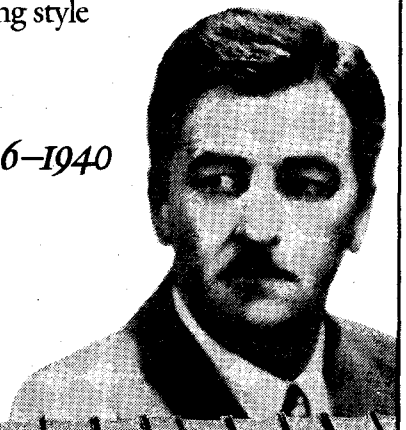

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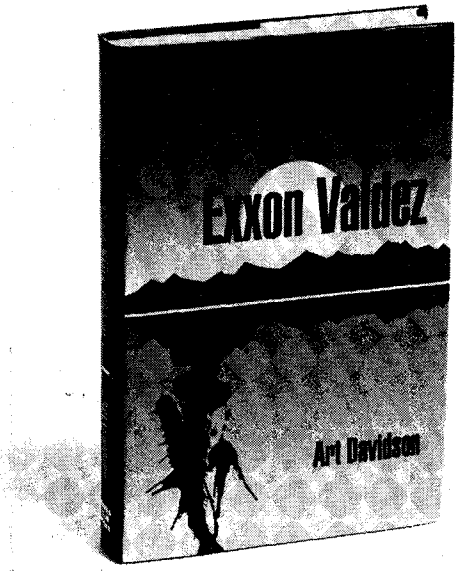

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"Who?"

"Quayle. Your Vice President. God dammit, Mr. President, where the hell did you find that guy anyway?"

"Please call me George. Look, you guys control the Congress. If you're all so worried, why don't you just stop him from doing anything? And then impeach him."

"For what?"

"For not doing anything."

"Couldn't you at least persuade him to resign before you do?"

"Resign? Of course. I could do that in a minute. But who would replace me if he resigns first?"

"Does it matter?"

"Politics stops at the water's edge."

"Consider it accomplished." Nobly, and with a condescending air of self-satisfaction, he moved to his desk and flipped the switch on his intercom. "Primrose?"

"Yes. Mr. President?"

"Get me Little Prince. I want to talk to him."

"On the telephone, sir?"

"Of course on the telephone! Do you think I want him here? I'll take it inside. Excuse me, fellas. He'll be gone before you know it." With the wave and the over-the-shoulder smile familiar to news photographers, he exited, closing the door behind him on a room relaxed into silence.

"See, Jim? I promised he'd do the right thing, didn't I?"

"Thanks, Jim. He's a real George, isn't he?"

"In England they would call him a Charlie," said the Secretary of State, who by then had been there.

"It's one of the reasons he remains so popular."

"Give me another."

"No one dislikes him."

"No one disliked Reagan either."

"Except George."

"What about Quayle, Jim? You're the one who checked him out, weren't you?"

"Don't ask me that."

"He'll scream too."

"Thank you, Charlie. He swore to me on everything holy to him, and there seems to be a lot, that there was not a single thing in his entire background that could ever prove embarrassing. That should have made me suspicious. When that National Guard draft-dodging scam unraveled I hit the ceiling. By then George had to keep him, but he almost dumped me."

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"Why won't he tell us why he picked him?"

"He doesn't know."

"Do you?"

"He wanted a running mate who'd look worse than he does. Quayle was the only name the computer would give."

"I miss Richard Nixon."

"So do we."

They froze at the turn of the doorknob and all turned with expectation to face in that direction. The man who had sauntered away confidently came ambling back in with an appearance of amused bewilderment, moving his head moderately from side to side and chuckling to himself rhythmically.

"Well, guys, guess what—I think you're all out of luck," he announced, laughing, as though releasing good news. "The Little Prince refuses to resign. He says he's very happy where he is right now."

"There's nothing funny about that."

"I think there is. I may have caught him at a bad time. I think he was playing a video game. 'Varoom, varoom, varoom' was the first thing he said. He tells me he can't imagine a better spot than the one he's got right now. He also tells me he's just a heartbeat away from the presidency."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"Does he mean your heartbeat or his?"

"I forgot to ask. The way he puts it, if he wasn't the Vice President he might have to go back to welding or writing press releases, and he fears he may have lost his magic. He doesn't know if there's anything else he could be much good at but leading the free world and being head of the greatest industrial nation on earth. I didn't think we were still the greatest industrial nation, but he might know more than I do. And as Vice President, he says, he would be first in line to succeed me when I leave tomorrow."

"How the hell did he find that out?"

"Somebody must have told him!"

"Maybe he read my lips."

"He doesn't like to read."

"I knew it was a mistake, I told you it was a mistake!" howled the Secretary of State in a wail of piercing anguish. "We should never have given him that money for a tutor!"

The President's last official act in public was to wrap himself in the flag once more and pledge allegiance to it.

"That was disgraceful, George," said Charlie Stubbs frankly. "You degraded yourself and you desecrated the flag."

"Thank you, Charlie." □

Sermon on the Mountie

JOHN LEONARD

SOLOMON GURSKY WAS HERE. *By Mordecai Richler. Knopf. 413 pp. $19.95.*

Never eat the liver of a polar bear. It drives men mad.
—Ephraim Gursky to Solomon Gursky

Let us, under an arctic sky, chase black ravens and gnaw on some caribou bones. In his ninth novel, Mordecai Richler makes savage fun of Canada, frontier epics, tall utopian tales, Jewish radicals and parvenus, Scots-Irish power brokers, English anti-Semites—even Eskimos. This fun is made in a pastiche of styles from Old Testament loonytunes to Victorian pornography to Levi-Strauss creation myths to Bloomsbury plum puddings to soft-boiled private-eye whodunits and Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, S.J. Perelman and afternoon radio soaps.

But Richler is more imperial in his ambitions than to be satisfied with one more postmodern Pop Tart. He also takes on world history and original sin, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. And he hallucinates. If you must, think of *Solomon Gursky Was Here* as *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Jewish-Canadian Solitude*, though it seems to me to derive as much from Gimpel the Fool as from García Márquez. (Before there was magical realism there was the cabala.) Anyway, it dreams a dream of earthly paradise gone wrong, a wasteland in which the just kingdom is nowhere to be found and the Flying Dutchman is a Wandering Jew.

The reviews so far, besides being mixed, have been weird. I can't offhand recall another important novel in which a famously wicked writer spells out his message at the end of the book—in block letters no less, ALL CAPS—and nobody bothers to mention it, much less pick a fight. However: the plumbing.

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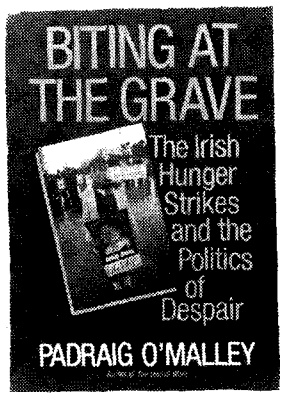

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whom in Canada all Seagram's flows. This new royalty has of course a peasant past; the Gurskys invented themselves in bootlegging and gangsterism during Prohibition. Nor were the Gursky brothers—piggy Bernard, wimpy Morrie and dreamy Solomon—the first members of their family to traffic in moonshine. In this, as in so much else, they follow the lead of their Russian-Jewish grandfather, Ephraim, who, hard by the Montana border in 1861, specialized in something called Whoop-Up Bug Juice—red peppers, ginger, molasses, chewing tobacco, whiskey and creek water—which he peddled by the cupful to the Blackfoot Indians.

But Ephraim was always mythic: the son of a Minsk cantor; a pickpocket and a pimp in Charles Dickensian London; a penal colonist in Tasmania; a stowaway on Sir John Franklin's polar expedition, in 1845, in search of a Northwest Passage; a peddler of beaver pelts in St. Petersburg; a runner of guns to New Orleans during the American Civil War; a player of pianos in Klondike saloons; a buddy of Geronimo; a shaman and a con man who converted Eskimos to Judaism. (Substituting seal blubber for chicken fat wasn't so hard for these Eskimos, but, obliged to fast on Yom Kippur, they did tend to starve to death while waiting six months for the northern sun to set.)

About Solomon Gursky in particular, you should know he was never the same after his grandfather kidnapped him by dogsled, out of the prepubescent into the preternatural. What the boy learned from Ephraim, "a raven perched on his shoulder, the two of them warming themselves under the shifting arch of the aurora on the shores of the Great Slave Lake," among "the white wolves and the black ravens of the barren land," changed Solomon's perspective. When the old man died, the boy was led out of the wilds by a raven. Ever after, he Thought Big. He talked about Trotsky and the Red Army, about Marx and the *Theses on Feuerbach.* He showed up in photographs with George Bernard Shaw and H.L. Mencken. He fell in Gatsby-like love with a Canadian Daisy, the *shiksa* Diana. He was accused of murder. And then he disappeared, from Canada if not from history, in a suspicious crash of his Gypsy Moth airplane in 1934.

In the 1980s Moses Berger—part-time academic, full-time alcoholic, author of essays for *Encounter* magazine on Yiddish etymology and Jewish radical life in old Montreal, "an enormous failure, a tragic waste" and a prime example of "the failure syndrome in the progeny of great Canadian artists"—is writing a biography of Solomon. Partly, this is because Moses met Solomon's children, Henry and Lucy, in his own troubled boyhood, and was hooked by their secret. Partly it's because an alcoholic needs an impossible project in which to dissipate his energy and hope. And partly it's because, by "exposing" the Gurskys, Moses will avenge himself for his corrupt father, the poet L.B. Berger, who sold out his art and his politics to become a "lapdog" of these nouveaux riches, to versify at birthday parties in praise of piggy Bernard. (L.B.'s ex-friend, the fur dyer Shloime Bishinsky—a reader of Mandelstam and Aaron Zeitlin—explains: "What I'm trying to say, forgive me, is that such princes in America are entitled to their mansions, a Rolls-Royce, chinchilla coats, yachts, young cuties out of burlesque shows. But a poet they should never be able to afford. . . . It has to do with what? Human dignity. The dead. The sanctity of the word.")

Everything in this novel is Oedipal. When Bernard's little boy, Lionel, runs away from a fight, Bernard tells him, "I'm going to phone the Jewish General Hospital right now, to see if they'll exchange you for a girl." He returns from the call to say, "I'm stuck with you. They don't take cowards." When a short story by *Wunderkind* Moses is accepted by *The New Yorker*, his jealous father intercepts and destroys the letter, telling Moses he's been rejected.

Everything in this novel is also cannibalistic. Sir John Franklin's search for the Northwest Passage ended in cannibalism—for Ephraim, an irony-rich diet. At his seventy-fifth birthday party, Bernard sinks his teeth into Lionel's hand, "biting down on his son's fingers as hard as he could"—which is only a warmup for when Solomon's son Henry, the Hasidic Howard Hughes, dies in the frozen Northwest Territories, and *his* son, Isaac, actually *eats* him, like a drumstick, after which Isaac's lawyer announces: "My client is still suffering from bereavement overload and has nothing to say to the press at this point in time." A bush pilot from the Land of the Midnight Sun muses on the subject for a television audience: "Well, I'll tell ya, it kind of puts you off your prime rib. Like, you know, it's so good and sweet. Hardly any gristle."

But according to Mordecai Richler, all of history is cannibalistic Oedipalism; and for most of it, "Jewish dreamers" are to blame.

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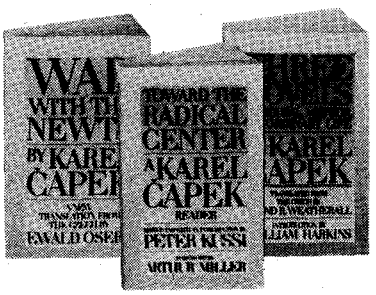

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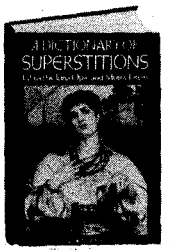

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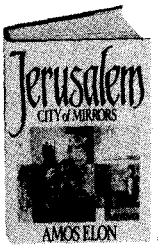

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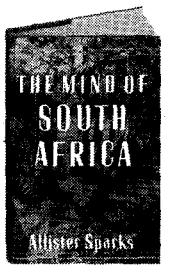

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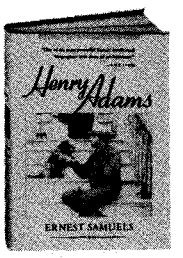

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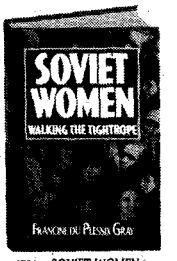

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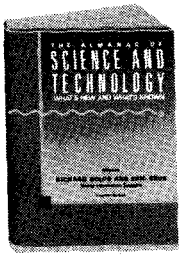

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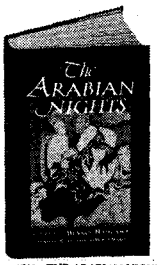

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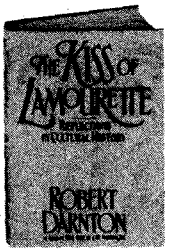

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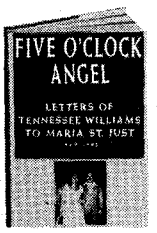

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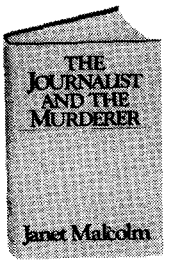

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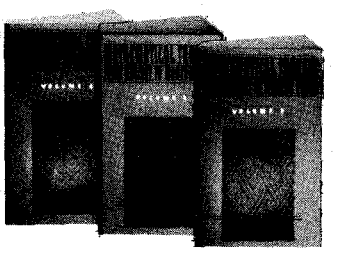

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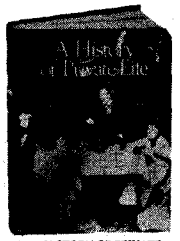

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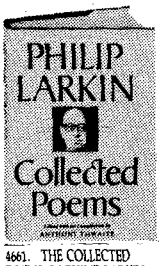

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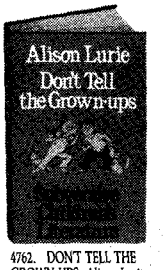

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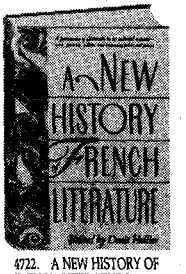

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Moses pursues Solomon in old geographies and diaries and newspaper clippings, in the oral histories of family retainers, in Solomon's own journals, in the dying Diana's letters about her Gatsby, in Morrie's sanitized memoir of the House of Gursky, and in a detective novel about the "Gersteins" by Morrie's son, Barney. There are mysterious sightings of Solomon in Budapest and Havana and gnomic unsigned notes posted from places like Amman and Saigon. It seems that he might not be so dead, after all. Not only that, but in various reincarnations, with a gold-tipped Malacca cane, someone very much like Solomon has always been there—*wherever*—like Kilroy or Woody Allen's Zelig, a tourist among the traumas of the century: with Mao on the Long March; on hand for the plot to kill Hitler; running guns, like his grandfather, except to the nascent State of Israel; placing the last telephone call to Marilyn Monroe; helping to plan the raid on Entebbe; sitting beside Maureen Dean at the Watergate hearings. And wherever Solomon goes, there's also a raven.

Solomon is a Johnny Appleseed of civilization and its discontents, a bootlegger of ideas. Ideas are liquid, like a brand of Gursky—Glen Levit or Masada Blanc. After the binge (history on a bender): delirium tremens.

And the raven signifies. There are in fact too many readings of the raven's symbolic meaning: the bird that failed Noah. The Eskimos believe that ravens cause avalanches, to feed on the corpses. The former curator of the Gursky Art Foundation reminds us, "A raven croaked the warning of a royal death in *Macbeth*. The raven [is] consecrated to the Danish war god." There's even a reading of the raven in a radio serial devoted to the cause of temperance, to which Moses is always listening on his way to and from bars and detox clinics:

> The Raven Men, man-shaped creatures from the ancient spirit world, are attacking the good people of Fish Fjord—their fingers bearing the talons of an owl; their noses formed like the beak of a hawk; their great arms feathered and winged. Many of the villagers run in fear, but others fight on against fearful odds. In the forefront is Captain [Al] Cohol, pitting his prowess against the pitiless pillagers, fighting like ten men in a gleaming circle of death.

But the reading Richler likes the most is that of the Haidas of the Queen Charlotte Islands, who hypothesize a pissed-off raven, in a world of inky blackness, before the Great Flood. The reason for this dark is an old man living in a house by the river:

> The old man had a box which contained a box which contained an infinite number of boxes each nestled in a box slightly larger than itself until finally there was a box so small all it could contain was all the light in the universe. The raven was understandably resentful. Because of the darkness on the earth he kept bumping into things. He was slowed down in his pursuit of food and other fleshly pleasures and in his constant and notorious need to meddle and change things. And so, inevitably, he took it upon himself to steal the light of the universe from the old man.

Never mind. The raven, black as the heart of Richler's novel, is Jewish. So was Prometheus. And Prometheus was a bad idea.

> Ah, the mythical kingdom of the just, a veritable earthly paradise. A realm of underground rivers that churned out precious stones and the habitat of an astonishing breed of worms that spun threads of the most exquisite silk. It was purported to lie somewhere in the 'Indies,' and it was said that Prester John combined military acumen with saintly piety and that he was descended from the Three Wise Men. It was anticipated that he would help to conquer the Holy Sepulcher as well as defend civilized Europe from the Antichrist, the hordes of cannibals to be found in the lands of Gog and Magog. News of the kingdom was first circulated in a letter supposedly written by Prester John in 1165 and sent to the Byzantine emperor of Rome. Unfortunately the letter proved to be a forgery. There is no just kingdom, but only the quest for one, a preoccupation of idiots for the most part. (Sir Hyman Kaplansky to Moses Berger)

As the Kingdom of Prester John was to Prince Henry the Navigator, so Canada is, or was supposed to be, to Ephraim Gursky and his grandson Solomon. And Richler evokes this Dream Canada—the icebergs and igloos, the honky-tonks and Algonquin hunting grounds. He tramps the frontier with gun, ox, ax, kettle and sack of seed. He knows bark roofs and earthen floors; smudge fires and moose flies "big as bumble bees." He eats pigweed and wild onions. He is eaten by bears.

Small towns, too: "If Canada had a soul . . . it wasn't to be found in Batoche or the Plains of Abraham or Fort Walsh or Charlottetown or Parliament Hill but in The Caboose and thousands of bars like it that knit the country together from

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Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, to the far side of Vancouver Island. . . . A jar of rubbery Scotch eggs floating in a murky brine, bags of Humpty Dumpty potato chips hanging on a spike. A moose head or a buck's antlers mounted to the wall, the tractor caps hanging from it advertising GULF or JOHN DEERE or O'KEEFE'S ALE. The rip in the felt of the pool table mended with black tape. Toilet doors labeled BRAVES and SQUAWS or POINTERS and SETTERS. A Hi-Lo Double-Up Joker Poker machine in one corner, a jukebox in another."

And of course he knows the big cities, their skyscrapers and their ghettos and their bohemias; Horn's cafeteria on Pine Avenue in Montreal—and the Ritz-Carlton. But this Dream Canada is a forgery. (It's flying apart, like the Baltics.) According to Callaghan, a Gursky retainer who spends most of the novel trying to pay off a customs inspector the family wronged in its gangster days, "Canada is not so much a country as a holding tank filled with the disgruntled progeny of defeated peoples. French Canadians consumed by self-pity; the descendants of Scots who fled the Duke of Cumberland; Irish the famine; and Jews the Black Hundreds. Then there are the peasants from the Ukraine, Poland, Italy and Greece, convenient to grow wheat and dig out the ore and swing the hammers and run the restaurants, but otherwise to be kept in their place. Most of us are still huddled tight to the border, looking into the candy-store window, scared by the Americans on one side and the bush on the other. And now that we are here, prospering, we do our damn best to exclude more ill-bred newcomers, because they remind us of our own mean origins in the draper's shop in Inverness or the *shtetl or the bog*."

And besides Moses, everybody else is going crazy too: "The last time I was in the clinic there was a beautiful girl there I still can't get out of my mind. . . . Maybe only nineteen years old. She would drift into my room, shrug out of that awful starchy gown, and do an arabesque, a pirouette. . . . She never leaped, she soared. Then she would smile like a naughty girl, squat, and shit on my floor. It's all right, I'd say. I don't mind. She danced and shat on my floor every day for a week and then she was gone. We weren't allowed cutlery, but somehow she got her hands on a fork and it was enough to do the job. I don't know why I'm telling you this. If I had a reason I forgot."

On his deathbed, Bernard tells his wife:

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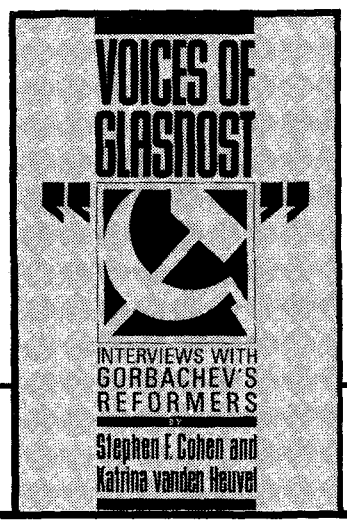

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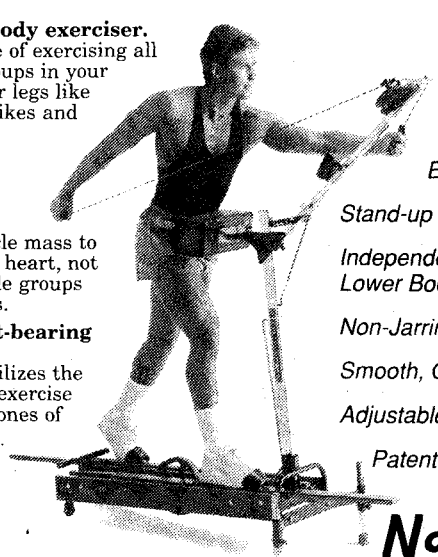

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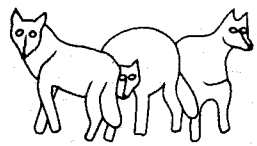

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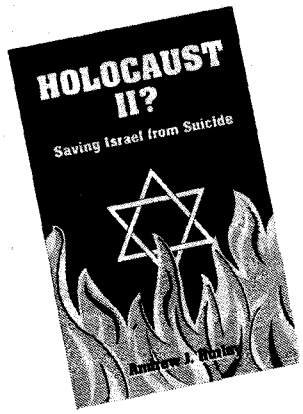

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"If God exists, I'm fucked."

Richler makes fun of Canada. But Canada for the purposes of this novel is notional, speculative—his Midgard, Badlands, Xanadu and Zembla; an innocence to spoil with abstractions; an imaginary map to scar. And not even Canada wanted the Jews.

Here's Solomon Gursky, meditating, as he slams a golfer against the wall in the WASPs-only country club he'll buy for his troublesome tribe:

> More than a hundred years after Maimonides wrote his *Guide for the Perplexed* your ancestors, pledging each other's health in cups of their own blood, were living in mean sod huts, sleeping on bare boards wrapped in their filthy plaids. . . . Spinoza had already written his *Ethics* when your forebears still had their children wearing amulets to ward off the evil eye and carried fire in a circle around their cattle to keep them safe from injury.

Sir Hyman shows up in London shortly after Solomon disappeared from Canada, with the same gold-tipped Malacca cane. To the sort of exclusive dinner party always being reported on in the diaries of Evelyn Waugh, he invites some of England's most notorious anti-Semites—only it's a Seder. And when they sink their teeth into the "unappetizing-looking biscuits," "bumpy with big brown blisters," something warm and red and sticky dribbles down their chins: "It's blood, don't you know? . . . We're all covered in ritual blood!"

It's as if Céline were Jewish.

In this same London, the young Moses on a Rhodes scholarship, having only just met Kaplansky and begun his investigation, is involved in a semi-incestuous affair with Solomon's self-destructive daughter, Lucy. Lucy, a terrible actress, nevertheless stars herself in a vanity production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Opening night, with the Frank family huddled in the attic, there's a crash below: "The Green Police? The Gestapo? Everybody onstage froze. Straining to hear. For a few seconds there was total silence and then something in Moses short-circuited. Not rising, but propelled out of his seat, he hollered, 'Look in the attic! She's hiding in the attic!' "

It's as if Richler, a Montreal bad boy, wanted to offend his elders as much as Philip Roth, the Newark bad boy, had offended them with his Anne Frank sexual hanky-panky in *The Ghost Writer*. But in Richler, as in Roth, there is a rage that consumes the naughtiness. If, in Roth's case, this rage seems to be against his critics—Irving Howe-specific—in Richler's case, in this novel, it's a rage against the very world his fathers made. Against this world, against his own throat, like the beautiful girl in the clinic, he lunges with a killing fork.

I could go on for another thousand words about the plot complications; the inside jokes; the circlings of the raven (and the Gypsy Moth) over Lake Memphremagog, as the novel closes like a fan; the McGibbon Artifact, "the only Eskimo carving of what was clearly meant to represent a kangaroo"; Meyer Lansky and the deadly Gimel. I might also complain about the loose ends, like escaping kites. And the women, like left luggage, abandoned on the Gursky quest: poor Charna Gursky, "discovered drowned in a swimming hole at the Friends of the Earth commune in northeastern Vermont at 4 o'clock one morning, wearing nothing but a pair of snakeskin boots"; luckless Gitel Kugelmass, erstwhile revolutionary stormbird, now long in the tooth and wondering, "Who will sing our songs, Moishe, or remember me when my breath was still sweet?"; Diana of the Two Diseases; Beatrice, who deserves better. (Really, if Solomon has a Diana to hunt for meaning, *must* Moses have a Beatrice as he circles heaven and hell?) Not to mention the gay-bashing (another father hates his son).

And I was going to say something about the cabala, which started off, after all, recommending a personal guide to the doctrines and the mysteries; which contains the secret knowledge of the unwritten Torah, communicated by God directly to *Moses*; which gave us the prophet Ezekiel's vision of a chariot, like the Gypsy Moth; which proposed creation as a process of the ten emanations of the sefirot and the very same twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet that are painted on the headboard of cannibalistic Isaac's arctic bed ("A seal barked a Shin. A Resh was tied to a caribou's tail. A Daleth danced with a musk-ox"); to which Bahir added the transmigration of souls, like Solomon Gursky into Hyman Kaplansky; to which the Sephardim added cosmic cycles, as in this novel; according to which En Sof withdrew into himself, creating primordial space, scattering divine light, breaking the vessels—like Moses Berger and his liquor bottles. Shabbataianism: sacred sin! And so on. Richler is every bit as

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much an anti-Promethean as Isaac Bashevis Singer.

But this is to fudge. For all Richler's fun and games, he's as bloody-minded as his ravens. Solomon has let him down, as well as Moses and the modern world. "You haven't got it nearly right," says Callaghan to Moses; "Mr. Bernard is vulgar, but all of a piece. Totally consumed by his appetite for riches. But Solomon. . . ." And Moses says: "Betrayed hopes?" And Callaghan agrees: "Yes." Of course, like his grandfather, the religious charlatan. Like all shamans, navigators, wise men.

Solomon's last words to Moses from Hanoi in 1978—those block letters, those ALL CAPS—are perfectly clear to everybody except reviewers of Mordecai Richler: "LOOK AT IT THIS WAY. THE SYSTEM WAS INSPIRED, BUT IT IS MAN THAT IS VILE. IT WON'T WORK. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. THE MANIFESTO. THE WORLD CONTINUES TO PAY A PUNISHING TOLL FOR OUR JEWISH DREAMERS."

And Moses, at last, believes him dead, "in the Gulag, or a stadium in Latin America. Wherever, the ravens would have gathered."

So much for Jesus Christ and Karl Marx—and Freud, too, so full of Oedipus; and maybe Einstein, who stole the light; and I don't know about Maimonides and Spinoza, or, for that matter, Wittgenstein. All the fathers and sons and gangsters and dreamers, eaten alive. □

Culture and Anarchy

R.J. LAMBROSE

TENURED RADICALS. *By Roger Kimball. Harper & Row. 204 pp. $18.95.*

Picture this: It is July 1866, and some 60,000 British workers have converged on London's Hyde Park to demand the vote. The Home Secretary, however, has closed the gates and declared the park off-limits. Most in the crowd turn back, but some break down the railings, trample the flower gardens and toss a few stones at the wealthy homes of surrounding Belgravia.

Now picture this: It is May 1987, and some 300 Yale students and teachers have gathered at the university's Whitney Humanities Center to hear professors from some of the nation's most elite universities discuss the relation between current literary theory and the college curriculum. The crowd listens attentively, laughs politely, applauds appreciatively. Barely a stone has been turned.

What do these two quite different crowd scenes have in common? Well, in the case of the Hyde Park Riots, as they were called, the episode became the representative anecdote for *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold's celebrated jeremiad against barbarism, philistinism and populism in English life. In the case of the Whitney Center Rites, as such symposiums might well be called, the episode has become the representative anecdote for Roger Kimball's recent book, an equally indignant screed against the barbarism, philistinism and populism of the "tenured radicals" of higher learning.

Like Arnold, whom he repeatedly invokes as his model, Kimball sees Culture—"the best that has been known and said"—as deeply threatened in contemporary America. Only for him the threat does not stand, ill dressed, ill humored and impatient, outside the gates of the humanistic tradition. Instead, anarchy preens itself within the very heart of that tradition—the university—and what's worse, it has come dressed to kill. Many of the pointy-headed, postmodern, deconstructionist, new historicist "radicals" whom Kimball indicts are, to his disgust, tenured. "The radical ethos of the sixties has been all too successful," he laments, "achieving indirectly in the classroom, faculty meeting, and by administrative decree what it was unable to accomplish on the barricades." The aim of the "radicals," he warns, "is nothing less than the destruction of the values, methods, and goals of traditional humanistic study." His book is thus offered as an exposé of a "concerted effort to attack the very foundations of the society that guarantees the independence of cultural and artistic life" and as a "chronicle of the progress of that destruction." *Tenured Radicals*, he declares breathlessly, is a "report from the front."

Some front. Reading Kimball's dispatches from Yale, Princeton and Columbia, one doesn't exactly smell the gunpowder as he recounts yet another hair-raising battle at yet another postmodernist colloquium or yet another

R.J. Lambrose (a pseudonym) writes "The Abusable Past" column for Radical History Review *and is completing a screenplay, "Dead Critics Society."*

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hairsplitting skirmish in yet another postmodernist collection of essays. This is pretty deadly stuff, to be sure, but the only visible wounds are to feelings. Indeed, one wonders what thoughts ran through Kimball's mind each time Hilton Kramer, his boss at *The New Criterion*, assigned him to cover one of these symposiums. Did he get down on his knees and plead for relief ("Send Norman Cantor!"), or did this New Centurian actually volunteer to enter the no man's land of contemporary "theory"? We'll probably never know, but whatever the real origins of the essays that make up this volume, Kramer must have been satisfied with the results, for a number of Kimball's frontline dispatches first appeared in his journal, and the volume is thoughtfully dedicated to him (though the conventional acknowledgment of prior publication is curiously omitted). So even if Corporal Kimball's chronicle fails to win the hearts and minds of the threatened millions, it does not matter, for, as Shakespeare put it, " 'twas caviar to the general."

Now Shakespeare is undoubtedly part of the endangered humanistic tradition across which the ever-vigilant Kimball has vowed to throw his body. But beyond the Bard and a few obligatory nods toward Plato, Picasso and Nietzsche, it's anybody's guess who or what Kimball would include in *his* canon, for he seems bent on keeping the best that was known and said in Western Civilization a clubhouse secret. Although he chides literary theorist Jonathan Culler for failing to specify "his own idea of a good college curriculum," Kimball keeps his own "sweetness and light" under a bushel. Nor is the list to be found in E.D. Hirsch's popular *Cultural Literacy*, which he dismisses as shamelessly promiscuous in its choices. So what does Kimball have in mind? Perhaps the Clifton Fadiman Reading Program, or Mortimer Adler's Great Books, complete with handy Syntopicon and bound in genuine calf's leather—which is to say, the double no-no of dead white males wrapped in the skin of dead brown animals. Or perhaps he fears that to name his favorites is to expose them to even greater danger. Paranoia, if nothing else, runs deep in *Tenured Radicals*.

Yet if the contents of the canon remain a mystery in Kimball's book, so too do his fabled "radicals," the 1960s leftists who have installed their "political agenda" in the modern curriculum. Indeed, aside from his villains' fashionable leather outerwear, imitation or not, one may well ask, Where's the beef? Despite brief allusions to Edward Said, Cornel West and a few others, there is no mention of such obvious suspects as historians Linda Gordon and Howard Zinn, linguist Noam Chomsky and literary critic Richard Ohmann. In fact, most of what passes for close analysis in Kimball is lavished on the likes of architect Peter Eisenman, philosopher Stanley Cavell, art historian Michael Fried and literary theorist Paul de Man, hardly the kind of comrades to have been found at the barricades during the Days of Rage.

Kimball waves this historical inconvenience away by borrowing (some four times) Frederick Crews's "apt" phrase "Left Eclecticism." But even the most generous political definition of that term could hardly include the Duke litcrit phenom Stanley Fish, to whom he devotes a whole chapter. By some accounts, Fish has acknowledged himself a longtime Republican. And in any case, Fish came to maturity well before the late 1960s and seems, if anything, to be enjoying a second and even more playful childhood today by taunting left and right alike with the claim that the real is rhetorical. This is "radical," but only in the Valley Girl sense that it is also like "awesome" and "gnarly."

So Kimball dutifully gnaws away at Fish's most recent collection of essays, *Doing What Comes Naturally*, no doubt keeping in mind Matthew Arnold's diatribe ("Doing as One Likes") against the dangers of English libertarianism. But there the analogy ends. Arnold never hesitated to indict the bourgeoisie and industrial capitalism for the philistinism they bred; Kimball never even raises the possibility. He may mock postmodern architecture, but not a word passes his lips about the companies underwriting it; he may deplore the proliferation of undergraduate courses on popular culture, but he has not a word to say about consumer demand; he may be scandalized at the "little publicized auctions" at which universities make their six-figure bids to various hard-hat deconstructors and soft-hat semioticians, but he cannot acknowledge how much all this says about the market and how little it says about politics.

Capitalism is the problem that has no name in this book, and for several good reasons. Unable to square his Arnoldian cultural conservatism (the "study of perfection") with his Trumpian economic conservatism (the "art of the

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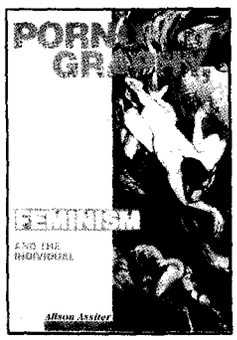

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deal"), Kimball prefers to ignore the embarrassment altogether. No need to put his and Hilton Kramer's sponsors at the Olin Foundation in an awkward position. It's far easier to blame the left. After all, William Buckley did it first in *God and Man at Yale*, and ambitious young reactionaries have been repeating the ritual ever since, from John LeBoutillier's *Harvard Hates America* to Ben Hart's *Poisoned Ivy*. So just as Kimball sounds the same anxious note throughout, his is but a variation on the old theme of the left's "war against Western culture" that conservatives have been rehearsing for forty years—or for 200 years, if one includes Edmund Burke in the canon. If *Tenured Radicals* is a "report from the front," then it has been a very long war.

Indeed, as a genuine reactionary, Kimball finds himself refighting many ancient battles. This gives the book an overwhelming sense of *déjà vu*, which, as his deconstructionist targets would say, ultimately subverts his goal of showing that "the situation is far worse than any are ever likely to have imagined." For, as Kimball himself acknowledges at one point during his long Ahab-like pursuit of Professor Fish, Fish's rhetorical position is as old as the Sophists'. Which may explain why Kimball falls back so easily upon the epithets of decadence, corruption and seduction to describe the impact of the "new sophistry." His enemies are not new at all; they are rather all too familiar, canonical even in the perverse delight they take in what Arnold called the "free play of the mind."

Yet for all the timeless and tiresome quality of Kimball's complaints, they still emerge out of a particular historical moment. He provides a helpful clue to that context by opening the book with an evocation of the vanished Golden Age at (where else?) Yale in the 1950s, years before Kimball had himself arrived in New Haven. What became of the good old days, Kimball asks, when the *Bulletin of Yale University* for the academic year 1958-59 could confidently assert the need to gain "an acquaintance with the great ideas which have influenced the actions of men in the past, and continue to do so in the present." Back then, Kimball writes nostalgically, there were no pesky feminists complaining about "the use of *man* and *men*," no surly black and Latino professors grousing that "there is no agreed on set of 'great ideas' that speak equally to every ethnic and racial group."

Right. There were also no women at Yale, and the number of black freshmen had not yet broken into double digits. Here we finally get to the real political agenda of Kimball's book, for what is at risk in *Tenured Radicals* and in the larger debate over canon and curriculum is nothing less than a highly valued form of cultural capital—long monopolized and, as Lawrence Levine has recently shown in the case of Shakespeare, sometimes expropriated by a WASP elite. In the years following World War II this monopoly was broken, and a generation of male academics—many of them second- or third-generation "ethnics"—were granted their first access to this capital, and with it their first entry into the academy. (At Kimball's Yale, it might be noted, the entry came particularly slowly.) We should not be surprised, therefore, when these same intellectuals recoil at the announcement by Stanley Fish, the Michael Milken of litcrit, that they have been holding junk bonds; or worse, that they have been "downsized" to make room for feminists and minorities in a leveraged buyout orchestrated from within by their own deans. Like those middle-class Brits who embraced the Reform Bill of 1834 (which enfranchised them) but reviled the Reform Bill of 1867 (which gave

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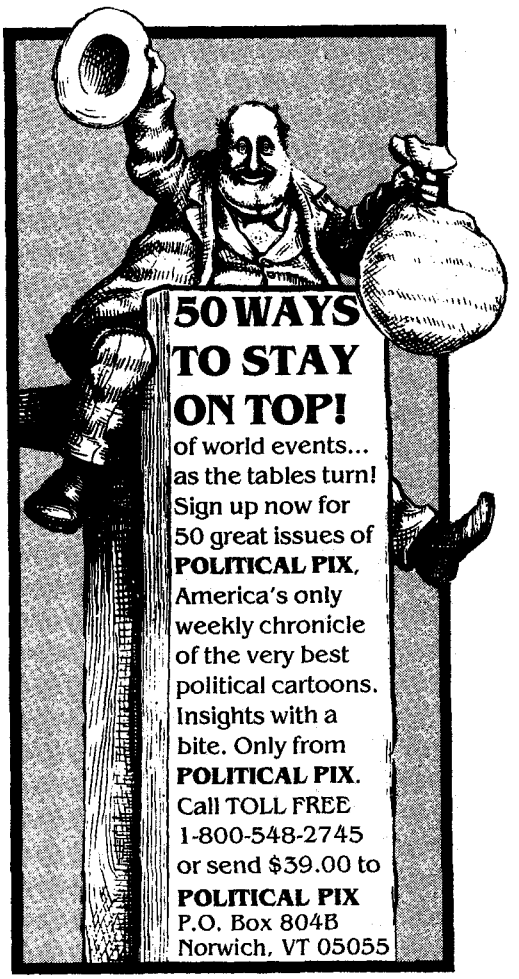
the vote to working-class men), the beneficiaries of the postwar G.I. Bill now anathematize the "administrative decrees" of affirmative action.

Roger Kimball does not belong to this generation, but his book—from its dedication to its conclusion—speaks to them and for them; and like them, he has nothing but contempt for the scholars and administrators who have pandered to recent trends in the humanities. Still, his contempt and envy scarcely explain the insistently military cast Kimball gives to his account of the "crisis" in the humanities. Nor does it explain why Yale's humanities center should be his Hyde Park. But then perhaps it's not. As a Yale graduate, Kimball's personal agenda returns him to his alma mater. But his political agenda inexorably draws him to the Western Front, where things are far from quiet. There, in California, the minority population will soon become the majority, and when they do, they will probably have different ideas about what will count as "sweetness and light."

It is this fearsome prospect that erupts in Kimball's preface and in his first chapter, where he reports angrily on the "spectacle" of Jesse Jackson "marching with 500 students at Stanford chanting, 'Hey hey, ho ho, Western culture's got to go.' " Although Kimball fudges the matter, the Stanford students were only trying to make a required course more inclusive and not waging "war against Western culture." But then again, the Hyde Park rioters, whom Matthew Arnold wished "unflinchingly forbidden and repressed," were only demanding the vote for working people. In the face of the crowd, Roger Kimball, like Arnold, glimpses only the specter of anarchy where others might just see the stirrings of democracy. □



Gathering Moss

GENE SANTORO

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"He let the talent dissipate, let it go all over the place instead of holding it in one place as the repository of the sixties. Then you could have said, 'Goodbye, *Atlantic Monthly*. Goodbye, *Harper's*. Goodbye, *New Yorker*.' He missed that. *He missed that*. That was his huge flaw."

That's David Weir, co-author of the 1975 stories on the kidnapping of Patty Hearst that helped catapult *Rolling Stone* from a counterculture paper about music to a world-class magazine. "He" is Jann Wenner, editor, publisher and founder, in whose image the magazine is graven. That set of not-quite-mirror images—Wenner beholding himself, and through himself, his writers and readers—is the focus of Robert Draper's densely researched, beautifully told book.

It's hard to remember or imagine if you look at it today—fat, smug and glossy, swollen with ad supplements, aloof from, maybe not even conscious of, many of the most significant aspects of the pop culture it seems to chase. But once upon a time, in brilliant fits and starts, *Rolling Stone* was a magazine that mattered. Some of our best writers about music and culture either got started at or got published in the *Rolling Stone* of the early 1970s.

It's good—no, essential—to be reminded of that, because the magazine's recent, sadly ironic claim to fame is that it has exemplified the increasingly conglomerated nature of popular culture since the mid-1970s. *Rolling Stone*'s most obvious steps in that direction have been its Perception/Reality self-promotion campaign of the 1980s (which explicitly repudiated the magazine's hippie heritage in favor of yuppie values—and more lucrative ads) and its "Marketing Through Music" newsletter (a prime incubator of corporate-sponsored rock tours and the merchandising that so profitably surrounds them). The magazine's post-heyday associate publisher calls it, with no apparent irony and a high degree of accuracy, "the *Wall Street Journal* of rock and roll." Thus the temptation to make *Rolling Stone* represent what happened to the sixties generation and their culture is not only irresistible, it's unavoidable.

To his credit, Draper avoids nearly all the pop-sociology pomposities that metaphor evokes. Instead of using the magazine as an excuse to make vapid pronouncements about our changing world, he delves into its history with painstaking care (and more than 200 interviews). To the extent that life inside any publica-

Gene Santoro writes on music for The Nation.

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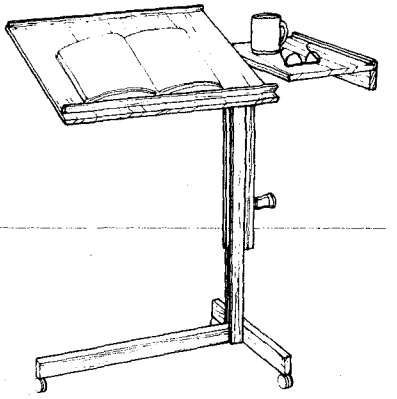

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tion refracts the larger life outside, *Rolling Stone Magazine: The Uncensored History* is a portrait of an era. As Draper puts it:

> *Rolling Stone*'s war between its enduring conscience and its boundless commercial appetite . . . seen in virtually every issue of today's slick but self-conscious *Rolling Stone*, reflects a conflict greater than its own. It reflects two decades of stirred passions and best intentions, out of which emerged no clear moral consensus to replace the old. . . . Since 1984, the cover of *Rolling Stone*—once so hallowed an icon that Dr. Hook sang about it in 1973—has been determined, in large measure, by focus group surveys and other research tools.

To an overwhelming degree, *Rolling Stone*'s contradictions mirror those of Jann Wenner, whom *Spin* founder Bob Guccione Jr. has called "the Dr. Faustus of the yuppie generation." So Draper's is also, inevitably, a portrait of Wenner, would-be media mogul, inveterate starfucker (he once claimed to have started the magazine in order to meet John Lennon) and editor with a genius for plucking the right writers and staff members out of the most unlikely places and then letting them have their heads. The book is a portrait of those people as well: their persistent tugging at the reins, their glorious excesses and successes in the first decade and their disappearance in the second.

Draper writes, " '*Rolling Stone* magazine,' said [early 1970s *Rolling Stone* publisher] Larry Durocher, 'is Jann in print.' When Wenner founded the magazine, he brought both his brilliance and his insecurities to its pages."

According to Draper's meticulous and detailed chronicle, Jan (later Jann) Wenner exhibited both characteristics from his earliest days. Born in New York in 1946, baby Wenner moved with his family to California, where his father made his fortune. As a student at Chadwick, an exclusive boarding school, Wenner started a little newspaper, attacked the school's ban on dungarees and was editor of the yearbook, which captioned his photo, "Greatness knows itself."

Turned down by Harvard, where his social ambitions had led him to apply, Wenner in 1964 had to content himself with crashing debutante parties in Berkeley while voyeuristically hanging out around the campus political scene. The soundtrack—the Beatles, the Stones, Dylan, the emerging psychedelia of the Grateful Dead and the Jefferson Airplane—was what really grabbed him, and it led him to become a disciple of famed Bay Area music critic Ralph Gleason, a jazzer who'd been converted by Dylan and the Beatles to the virtues of rock and roll. Gleason espoused the muddled notion that music is itself a kind of ecstatic politics that transcends the real world—a curious outgrowth of the art-for-art's-sake school. It was a position his young friend would seize upon and make into a magazine.

It wasn't the only thing young Wenner appropriated. After an aborted collaboration with Gleason on a rock and roll encyclopedia, Wenner decided to model a music magazine on England's *Melody Maker*. Taking Gleason's suggestion for its name, using another group's magazine title for his publishing company's logo and its mailing list for his subscriber base, Wenner hatched *Rolling Stone* and its parent, Straight Arrow. He cadged money from his friends and Gleason's allies, lifted his design from *Ramparts*' short-lived Sunday magazine, begged work space from a printer friend of Gleason, hired *Newsweek* reporter Michael Lydon as managing editor and set up shop. It was October 1967.

Though his first issue sold only 6,000 of the 40,000 copies printed—mainly because Wenner and Gleason tried to distribute it themselves—it brought a small host of hippie volunteers, a shifting cast of characters that would remain the core of *Rolling Stone*'s early staff. The music industry, thanks to Wenner's Gleason connection, advertised in the fledgling mag; these revenues paid the salaried employees while Wenner himself dipped into the subscription money for his living expenses. (This foreshadowed his rather highhanded use of Straight Arrow's coffers in later years.) And after the first couple of issues, music-biz execs like Atlantic's Jerry Wexler and Columbia's Clive Davis began to pay attention to Wenner's venture, which they thought could lend cultural respectability to the music they were putting out.

According to Lydon, the business/editorial split that characterizes magazines was less than sacred at *Rolling Stone* from its beginnings. For instance, Wenner told Lydon to pan Jimi Hendrix's *Band of Gypsies*, released by Capitol because of a management dispute, in order to lure Hendrix's regular label, Warner Bros., into the mag's advertising fold. The ploy worked, as did Wenner's exaggeration of circulation figures. The stage was set for Wenner's later

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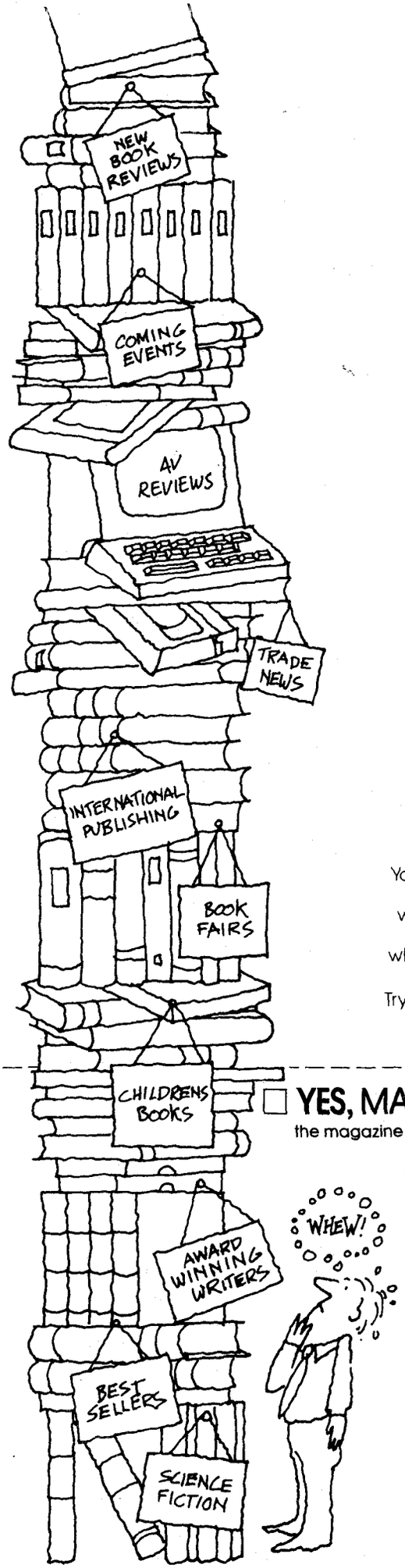

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uses of *Rolling Stone*, like stroking his movie-star and music-biz friends with cover stories and setting up advertorial supplements.

If Wenner's unprofessional tactics worked, it was at least partly due to the obvious genius of his brainchild. By its second year, *Rolling Stone* had acquired hard-boiled managing editor John Burks, who got rid of the adulatory interviews and features and replaced them with offbeat reporting, and copy chief Charlie Perry, who gradually systematized the flow and, with Burks, shaped much of the magazine. By 1969, writers who would help define the just-born notion that rock and roll merited serious criticism—Greil Marcus, Jon Landau, John Morthland, Lester Bangs—were as seduced by Wenner's promises of nearly 100,000 biweekly readers as by his then-unique offer to actually pay them. It was the dawn of *Rolling Stone*'s heyday, which blazed gloriously with the early 1970s arrival of idiosyncratic newshounds like Hunter Thompson, Grover Lewis, David Felton, Joe Eszterhas, Tim Cahill, Timothy Ferris, Timothy Crouse, Howard Kohn and David Weir.

In its glory, *Rolling Stone* was the conscience, if not the voice, of its generation. The stories it broke or covered in ways the establishment press wouldn't included such disturbing ones as the fiasco at the Rolling Stones' mammoth Altamont outdoor concert, which included the murder of a spectator by a Hell's Angel (Wenner insisted on pursuing the story despite his staff's exhausted depression and consequent desire to minimize coverage), the Manson family massacres, the Kent State killings, the kidnapping of Patty Hearst, Mel Lyman's mindlessly violent cult, Thompson's "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas," the McGovern campaign, the death of Karen Silkwood and the investigation of Kerr McGee. It's a list that would do any publication proud.

Along the way, while it was literally writing history, *Rolling Stone* survived circulation and distribution problems that nearly bankrupted Straight Arrow several times; legal troubles caused by plagiarism and factual errors; the annual advertising contraction that led to what writers called "the Wenner Plan," in which they were taken off salary and kept on freelance; internal political intrigues; and repeated and almost always ruinous spinoff projects. Perhaps hardest of all was Wenner's shifting of employees' positions on the masthead depending on how he felt about them at press time; his tendency to bully and fire (usually in incredibly roundabout and demeaning ways) writers who slammed records by or wrote critical profiles of his favorites and friends; produce contradictory memos; turn on mentor after mentor and rip up layouts and change covers much later than the last possible minute. Despite it all, *Rolling Stone* was, for the first half of the 1970s, a remarkable achievement, and left an enduring legacy.

But the 1977 move to New York did it in. The brilliant staff Wenner and his editors had assembled had begun to disintegrate earlier, but the translation from San Francisco to the Apple fed the star-fucker in Wenner at the expense of the editor. Replacing the off-the-wall visions of a Hunter Thompson was the by-the-numbers profile puffery of a Cameron Crowe. Sadly, inevitably, came the slide into mediocrity that has left *Rolling Stone* glitzier, far richer, immensely powerful and intellectually vacant.

Even in its heyday, though, the weaknesses and inconsistencies of the mag's music coverage were glaringly apparent. Ironically—since its name comes from a Muddy Waters tune—*Rolling Stone* has rarely showcased black-oriented music. It has steadfastly avoided any regular notice of jazz and other "marginal" sounds, whether from around the world or downtown New York. In spite of its own origins as a counterculture voice for then-underappreciated musical figures, it remained concerned with the icons of the British Invasion and the Summer of Love long after they had lost their vanguard status.

Draper is not likely to be invited to contribute to *Rolling Stone* anytime soon. And yet his book is not a hatchet job but a nuanced, well-wrought study packed with telling details and insights like the following:

> Jann Wenner yearned to be in the company of greatness. . . . Simply being there at those elegant Georgetown dinner parties was sufficient.
>
> This behavior always flabbergasted Larry Durocher. . . . The sight of this brilliant young man fawning over celebrity politicians like a starstruck teenager sickened Durocher, but he was powerless to stop it.
>
> "Jann suffers from an invisible talent," he would say. "There's no litmus test for a great editor. You can't throw a bucket of blue shit on him and see if he turns yellow. Now, I can't define his talent for you. But I know that he's gone through the last twenty years holding up a wet finger, and feeling the most subtle wind any human being on this earth can feel.
>
> "*And he looks right through himself.* He doesn't see that talent. So when he looks at someone whose talent he *can* see—well, he's just always been star-fucked for those people."

For a few incandescent years, that apparently unfillable void at Jann Wenner's center made his magazine one of the best in America. □

YIN AND YANG

My love is simple.
She sees a flower and she says:
flower. She sees the moon
and whispers: *moon.*
Alone at night, under the deep stars,
we walk hand in hand by the river.
I say there is no justice
and she answers: *moon, moon,*
stars, stars. What shall I give her
by way of an answer? No longer young enough
to see the world as I wanted
nor old enough to love it merely for what it is,
I pause, like a boat caught between tides
that must sing to its own moorings.
Nothing, myself included, is as I wanted it to be.
But I could get sentimental about all this,
I warn myself. So I take her again by the hand
until all the moonstruck faces have dispersed
into a sea of no large meanings.
And we walk on, like an old couple of mallards,
singing: *moon, moon, stars, stars.*

Michael Blumenthal

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EDITORIALS.

(*Continued From Page 765*)
trict Attorney's office on February 26. For eleven hours they ripped his books and papers apart, searched the cracks between the floorboards and, coming up with some stale relics of counterculture pharmacology, charged him with five felonies and three misdemeanors.

America likes its famous writers to act silly. It was considered good form when Hemingway got drunk with a bear. For decades Thompson—beneath all his psychedelic blarney a brilliant, phantasmagorical stylist and political savant famous for men's room conversations with presidential hopefuls—could do no wrong in Aspen. He would shoot his beloved tracer bullets into the night sky over the Rockies, drink Chivas Regal from the bottle and consume black beauties like M&M's while he wrote about the psychic tarantulas in his life in best-selling, exaggerated, druggie books. The punishment for this deviant behavior was that Bill Murray made a movie about him.

In going after Thompson the Aspen authorities displayed the sort of crazed zeal that moved F.B.I. agents to root through Joe Bonanno's garbage and to shoot a crossbow through his window. The bureau's excuse was that when it comes to organized crime, the law can know no bounds. This argument is more difficult to make when the target is a disorganized life style. After the search of the writer's home the District Attorney took an antique World War I Gatling gun (on the raid inventory it was described as a machine gun) to the U.S. Attorney in Denver and presumably tried to get him to bring federal firearms charges against Thompson.

The widespread impression in Aspen that the District Attorney was out to get Thompson was bolstered by his listing a child pornography tape among the items taken from the house. This turned out to be a videotape of the TV tabloid news show *Inside Edition* containing a BBC segment on child pornography in England.

Thompson wrote his own headline for the raid: LIFESTYLE POLICE RAID HOME OF 'CRAZED' GONZO JOURNALIST; 11-HOUR SEARCH BY SIX TRAINED INVESTIGATORS YIELDS NOTHING BUT CRUMBS. Among the felonies charged to Thompson were possession of 0.09 ounces of cocaine, possession of explosives (three sticks of dynamite and three blasting caps left on Thompson's property by a friend who blasts mountain creeks for agricultural irrigation) and possession of four Valium-like pills called Diazepam. "To bring felony indictments for a nothing amount of drugs that were clearly for personal use is crazy," said San Francisco lawyer Michael Stapanian. "More than an indictment, this is an invitation to get out of town."

The raid on Thompson's home is an example of the "stop and shop" searches law students are taught violate the Fourth Amendment. The search warrant was based exclusively on the unsubstantiated statement of a woman who after a visit to Thompson's house said Thompson threw a drink at her and touched her breast. She later told reporters that Aspen authorities had pressured her into making the complaint, telling her they were itching to get into the writer's house. It was an extremely shaky constitutional ground for a search warrant, but in the Bush war-on-drugs climate it's hard to imagine a court having the fortitude to deny a drug search against Hunter Thompson.

"People don't realize how far things have slipped: The watershed High Court decisions eroding the Fourth Amendment have gone virtually unnoticed," Thompson told an audience at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in late April, in the same foreboding tone he used when he once told college students that Richard Nixon represented "the werewolf within us." Thompson said that America is entering the era of the "retroactive warrant": "They search your house without cause, and if they find anything to charge you with, the courts will uphold it as a proper search. Today it's me, tomorrow it's you."

Deputy District Attorney Chip McCrory, who is prosecuting Thompson, insists the search and indictments were routine, but this is not an opinion widely shared in Aspen. Even Thompson's detractors think he was singled out for prosecution because his books, indeed his very existence, celebrate a life style that the new Aspen of million-dollar cottages would rather put behind it. The new Aspen enjoys reading about Uncle Duke in Doonesbury, but it doesn't want Uncle Duke living next door.

WARREN HINCKLE

Warren Hinckle is associate editor of the San Francisco Examiner. *The address of the Hunter S. Thompson Legal Defense Fund is P.O. Box 274, Woody Creek, CO 81656.*

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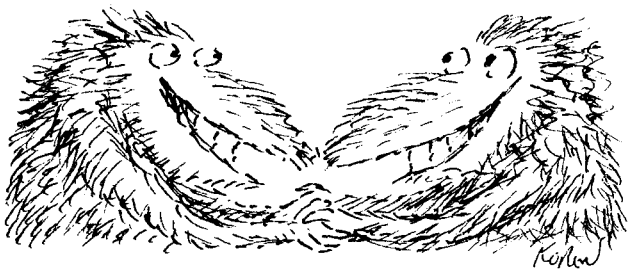

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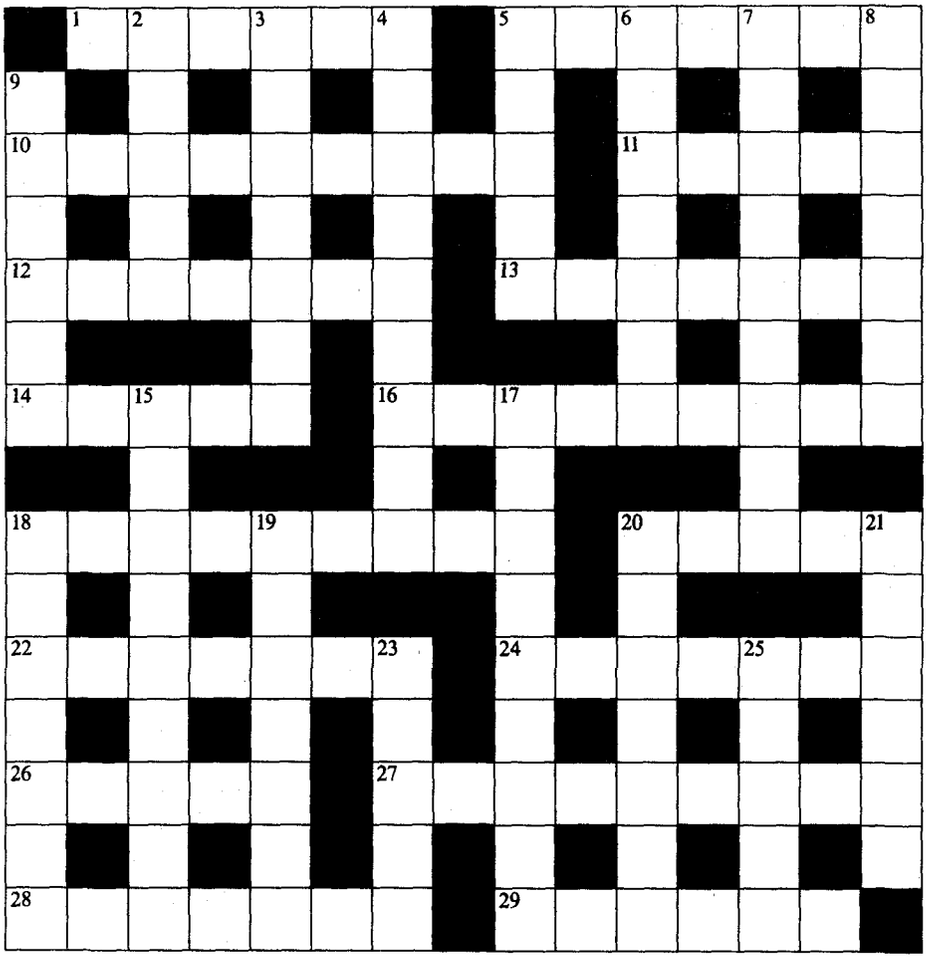
Crossword Puzzle No. 2292

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and 5 In a different case, a crumb or a box-like affair might show what's around you. (6,7)
10 Improperly penalizes what some people go on. (9)
11 Descriptive of balls of fire in the grate, possibly. (5)
12 Cape allowing certain types to fly? (7)
13 Ivan ran out of it, aspiring to such a state. (7)
14 Approaches a listener in opposite directions. (5)
16 It's sort of neat to get taken out by the opposite sex, assigned to an earlier period. (7)
18 It's difficult to get the cover off the rigidly orthodox. (4-5)
20 The Spanish hero comes back to me for first-aid. (5)
22 Adds something, like around a very quiet conclusion. (7)
24 Where certain games were first played at the capital in Washington? 7)
26 Were this that special face in the old form of yours? (5)
27 One of those peculiar fellows doesn't get in the counting procedure. (3,3,3)
28 The shape of the playing area might prove expensive. (7)
29 Become less dense in the beam, when the game official shortly enters. (6)

DOWN

2 A right to hold property is the subject of many movies! (5)
3 Van Gogh became partly this, making a couple of points about his place in France. (7)
4 How to make unlimited speed, anyway. (2,3,4)
5 Welles, perhaps, otherwise his offspring? (5)
6 With us coming up on a bad grade, things were made a little more palatable, perhaps. (7)
7 Certainly not highly praised, to get involved in a duel, next! (9)
8 and 21 down Painting with what some Indians use to make pictures on a boat may have a point—but they provide activities for many hobbyists. (4,3,6)
9 and 18 down The dear sort? (Abandoned lovers might be.) (6-7)
15 She carried Nero with a firm hold, ending up with a bad pain. (9)
17 Making the subdivision of a class of giraffes might be an impossible task! (4,5)
18 See 9
19 Rome's an unusual place in Italy . . . (3,4)
20 . . . and part of London has a month that ends up pretty good! (7)
21 See 8
23 Got up and managed to get along with things? (5)
25 A measure of strong liquor is supposed to be in the pudding. (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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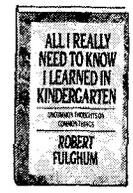

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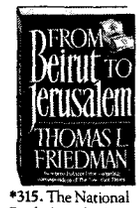

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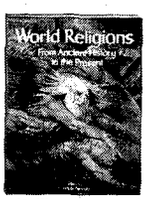

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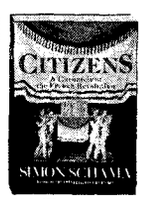

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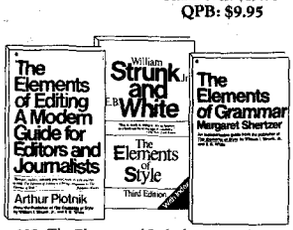
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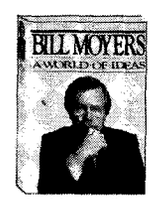

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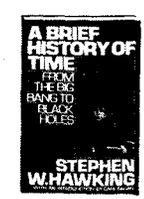

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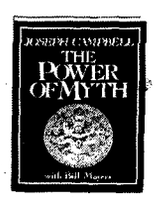

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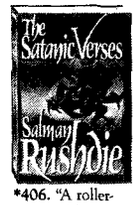

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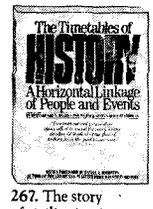

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